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5 Amazing
Holiday Layer Cakes

The Ultimate Baker's Wish List
Must-Have Gifts of the Season!

82 Recipes for Your **Best Holiday Baking!**

Retro Fruitcake Gets a **Cookie Redo**

Christmas Morning **Coffee Cake 3 Ways**

Baking with Peppermint
[Sweet Rolls, Pound Cake, Cream Puffs & More!]

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Around the World with **Holiday Cookies**

ICED EGGNOG SHORTBREAD COOKIE TREES
page 43

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table of contents

15 **A Baker's Ultimate Holiday Gift List**

Clue in your holiday shoppers with this list of a baker's must-have ingredients, kitchen tools, and cookbooks. Then give as good as you get and try one of our fresh ideas for homemade treats for your loved ones!

23 **Retro Redo:** Fruitcake Cookies

Our editor-in-chief shares the sweet story of why he'll always adore his grandfather's box mix-based cookies and then we twirl them up as cakey from-scratch bites

27 **Baker Profile:** Holiday Baking with Miro Uskokovic

Gramercy Tavern's celebrated pastry chef Miro Uskokovic dishes on how he brings a taste of his Serbian homeland to the holidays at this Michelin-starred restaurant in New York, New York

33 **From the Pantry:** Mulling Spices

Guaranteed to add a warm, wintry feel to your baking, this age-old spice blend has a complex past and an even more complex flavor

37 O TANNENBAUM TREE-SHAPED BAKING

From our sugar cookie cover star to cheesy arbor-shaped rolls, these centerpiece-worthy recipes take on one of the most festive signs of the season

47 THE ESSENTIAL . . . BÛCHE DE NOËL

Whether you go for the classic bûche or our modern twist, this step-by-step guide to the Yule log cake will help you craft an edible masterpiece

59 GREAT AMERICAN LAYER CAKES

From classic red velvet to towering Italian Cream Cake, we pay homage to the all-American layer cakes that are ubiquitous during the season

71 (PEPPER)MINT TO BE

Winter's favorite minty-fresh candy and extract takes center stage in everything from a triple-chocolate tart to cream cheese-covered sweet rolls

81 A POP OF PERSIMMON

Beloved among bakers for its sweetness and fiery orange hue, this East Asian fruit steals the show in a luscious cinnamon cake, a cozy apple crumble, and more

89 AROUND THE WORLD IN FIVE COOKIES

Featuring festive recipes from across the globe, these epic cookies will bring international flare and diverse, delicious flavor to your kitchen, no passport required

99 COFFEE CAKE, CUSTOMIZED

With two tasty variations on classic coffee cake and a zesty gingerbread marvel, these stir-together recipes will have you eating cake for breakfast all season long

107 **Origin of a Classic:** Lebkuchen

Discover how these spiced cookies emerged from the medieval streets of Nuremberg, Germany, to become a worldwide seasonal must-have

112 **Back Page Brownie:** Mulled Spice Brownies

Forget the traditional sugarplums. Packed with warm spices and spiked with port, visions of these decadent ganache-topped brownies will dance in your head.

VANILLA SLICE

Few recipes are as central to New Zealand's baking culture as the vanilla slice. Consisting of a generous layer of pastry cream sandwiched between exquisitely thin layers of flaky pastry, this classic dessert wouldn't be complete without a dose of New Zealand's own Heilala Vanilla. Heilala's premium vanilla beans bring depth and complexity to the custardy filling. Served with a glass of bubbly, this recipe offers indulgence by the slice.

Makes 16 (2-inch) squares

2¼ cups (281 grams) all-purpose flour
2½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) kosher salt, divided
1¼ cups (284 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed
½ cup (120 grams) ice cold water
4 cups (960 grams) whole milk
1⅓ cups (266 grams) granulated sugar, divided
2 Heilala Vanilla Beans, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved
10 large egg yolks (186 grams)
½ cup (64 grams) cornstarch
¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, softened
Garnish: confectioners' sugar

1. In the work bowl of a food processor, place flour and 2 teaspoons (6 grams) salt; pulse until combined. Add cold butter, and pulse until butter is dime-size. With processor running, add ½ cup (120 grams) ice cold water in a slow, steady stream just until dough comes together. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface, and shape into a disk. Wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.
2. Divide dough in half (about 342 grams each). Roll half of dough into a 12x8-inch rectangle. Fold dough in thirds, like a letter. Turn dough 90 degrees, and repeat procedure twice; wrap in plastic wrap. Repeat with remaining dough. Refrigerate for at least 20 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
4. Roll half of dough to an 11x10-inch rectangle (⅛ inch thick). Place on prepared pan. Cover with another piece of parchment, and place another rimmed baking sheet on top of dough.
5. Bake for 15 minutes. Press down on middle of top pan to release some of the air from the pastry. Bake until deep golden brown, about 10 minutes more, pressing down again halfway through baking. Press down on pan again. Remove top pan and parchment; let cool completely on pan. Repeat with remaining dough.
6. In a large saucepan, whisk together milk, ⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar, and vanilla beans and seeds. Cook over medium heat until steaming. Discard vanilla beans.
7. In a large bowl, whisk together egg yolks, cornstarch, remaining ⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar, and remaining ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) salt. Gradually add warm milk mixture to yolk mixture, whisking constantly. Return mixture to saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking constantly. Cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. (Mixture will be thick with a pudding-like consistency.) Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a large bowl. Stir in softened butter in two additions. Cover with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes.
8. Line an 8-inch square baking pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan. Cut each pastry into an 8-inch square, trimming as needed to fit. Place 1 pastry square in bottom of prepared pan. Pour warm pastry cream on top, smoothing flat, and top with remaining pastry square. Cover and refrigerate until set, 3 to 4 hours.
9. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Using a serrated knife, cut into 16 (2-inch) squares. Dust with confectioners' sugar, if desired. Serve immediately.

WHY IS VANILLA SO EXPENSIVE?

I am often asked why the price of vanilla has increased significantly over the last couple of years.

Spanning over 2000 years, vanilla is the only fruit-bearing member of the orchid family. It is one of the most labor intensive agricultural crops in the world with vanilla vines taking three years to fully mature.

The Kingdom of Tonga in Polynesia is home to a stunning array of 176 small tropical islands and thousands of miles of coral reefs. The climate is tropical equatorial, with warm temperatures and lush, green landscapes - perfect for growing Heilala vanilla.

Our orchid vines bear a small, creamy flower and on the day of opening must be delicately pollinated by hand (in most places where vanilla is grown, it isn't a native plant, and there aren't bugs or birds capable of pollinating the flowers).

Over the course of nine months a green bean will grow and ripen under the watchful eye of our farmers. When the tip of the green bean turns yellow, it is ready to be picked. Our vanilla beans then undergo a complex fermentation and curing process, baking under the sun for several months where the vanilla flavor develops and the beans turn black.

Demand for vanilla has risen over the last few years as global food brands have made the switch to real vanilla for their products joining the all-natural trend, pledging to remove artificial flavorings from their products. At the same time, supply has been constrained by climate events.

Cyclones are common in vanilla growing regions such as Tonga and climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of these storms complicating the already complex cycle of growing vanilla beans. Prices have increased as a result, with vanilla currently the same price per ounce as silver.

My family and I are proud to be part of this virtuous circle of nature, nurture and quality that sees the goodness you put into your baking also return to the very communities that help to bring Heilala vanilla to your kitchen.

Made with care because you bake with care.

Jennifer Boggiss
CEO and Co-Founder
Heilala Vanilla

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HEILALA® VANILLA

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In remembrance of his grandfather, Brian bakes a batch of his Glazed Fruitcake Cookies with his grandmother, whom he calls Mimi.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS, BAKERS! It's that season where we're all looking for a little warm inspiration in the form of spicy gingerbread, wintry peppermint, and—duh—boozy fruitcake. Well, look no further than this November/December issue.

From our tip-top Christmas tree-shaped baked goods to our American layer cakes blowout, we have the showstopping celebratory sweets your epic holiday plans require. Plus, this issue is packed with peppermint, coffee cake, cookies, mulling spices, and more. For an epic holiday centerpiece, try one of our bûche de Noëls, starting on page 42. On a homier note, I'm sharing my secret eggnog recipe alongside a few other brilliant homemade gifts that bakers can craft for their loved ones (page 23).

This is the second Christmas I'll have without my grandfather, a man I adored and learned so much from. I will always miss him, but this season brings out a particular nostalgia for him and his famous fruitcake cookies. He'd take a box mix of spice cake, crumbled Claxton Fruit Cake, and pecans and create something entirely new and festive. In honor of him, I've given it a fresh, from-scratch Retro Redo twirl (page 23). It's a cookie I know Grandad would love, and that's the highest praise I can give a baked good!

Happy baking,

Brian

Brian Hart Hoffman
Editor-in-Chief

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Bake from Scratch and Bob's Red Mill are teaming up to bring you the first-ever **Better Baking Academy**, a one-year, baking education-driven series that will deliver custom recipes, invaluable baking lessons, and visual tutorials straight to your inbox every month. Created to empower the home baker, the Better Baking Academy with Bob's Red Mill brings the classroom to your kitchen. Conquer recipes you never thought you'd be able to manage.

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The best part? It's **FREE**. You can't put a price on education like this. Better baking skills won't be the only perk. When you sign up, you'll get two welcome kits, one from us and one from Bob's Red Mill, ensuring you're set for success. You'll also be able to enter to win a new Bob's Red Mill product every month through Instagram giveaways on @thebakefeed.

Get connected with other bakers around the world and a select group of today's top baking influencers who will be baking and sharing the recipes each month along with you.

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Visit *bakefromscratch.com/better-baking-academy* to enroll in the Better Baking Academy today.

ADVERTISING

ORANGE PARIS-BREST

Give your holiday table a touch of elegance with this citrusy take on one of France's most iconic pastries, the Paris-Brest. Président® butter delivers exceptional light and airy texture to the signature pâte à choux base while imparting a velvety richness to the orange zest- and liqueur-spiked pastry cream.

Makes 12 Paris-Brest

- **½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (127 grams) Président unsalted butter**
- **½ cup (120 grams) water**
- **½ cup (120 grams) whole milk**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **5 large eggs (250 grams), room temperature**
- **1 large egg white (30 grams), room temperature**
- **Orange French Buttercream (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: sliced almonds, sugared rosemary, and sugared cranberries**

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Using a permanent marker and a 3-inch round cutter as a guide, draw 6 circles each on 2 sheets of parchment paper (12 circles total). Turn parchment over, and place on 2 baking sheets.

2. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add ½ cup (120 grams) water, milk, granulated sugar, and salt; bring to a boil. Using a wooden spoon, stir in flour. Cook, stirring constantly, until a skin forms on bottom of pan, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. With mixer on low speed, beat until dough is warm to the touch, about 1 minute. Add eggs and egg white, one at a time, beating until combined.

3. Transfer batter to an 18-inch piping bag fitted with a 9/16-inch star tip. Place tip on a drawn circle, and start by applying even pressure. Hold tip about ¾ inch above parchment paper, and slowly pipe around drawn circle. Begin to lessen pressure on piping bag as you come to end of circle; stop applying pressure, letting it overlap slightly. Wet your finger with water, and smooth down overlap. Repeat with remaining batter. Top with sliced almonds.

4. Bake for 15 minutes. Rotate pans, and bake until puffed and golden brown, about 10 minutes more. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on wire racks.

5. Using a serrated knife, cut each Paris-Brest in half horizontally. Fill a piping bag fitted with a ⅜-inch open star tip with Orange French Buttercream. Pipe tall rosettes around bottom half of each Paris-Brest. Cover with top half of each Paris-Brest, and press down gently. Garnish with sliced almonds, sugared rosemary, and sugared cranberries, if desired. Serve immediately, or refrigerate until ready to serve. These are best served the same day.

Orange French Buttercream

Makes about 4½ cups

- **1¾ cups (350 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (24 grams) packed orange zest (about 4 oranges)**
- **4 large egg yolks (76 grams), room temperature**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**
- **2 cups (454 grams) Président unsalted butter, softened**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) orange liqueur**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together sugar and orange zest by hand until combined. Whisk in egg yolks and eggs. Place mixer bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer registers 155°F (68°C) to 160°F (71°C).

2. Carefully return bowl to stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment, and beat at high speed until bowl is cool to the touch, about 8 minutes. Add butter, 2 tablespoons (28 grams) at a time, beating until combined. Beat in liqueur and salt. Use immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If refrigerating, let frosting come to room temperature, and rewhip before using.

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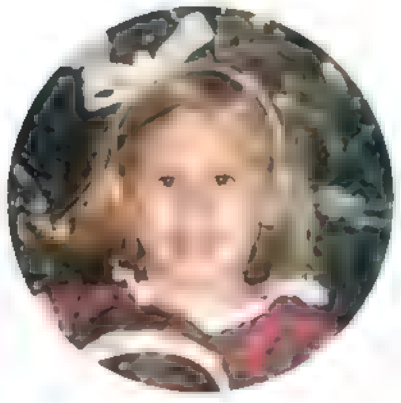
WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE HOLIDAY BAKING MEMORY?

The *Bake from Scratch* team shares their sweet baking holiday memories—and precious childhood photos—for your nostalgic enjoyment!

"I'll never forget the first dessert I prepared for my family's Christmas dinner. I was about 7 years old and my sous chef was a 4-year-old family friend. We set out to make ambrosia salad. I don't know that I'd ever tasted the fruit- and coconut-filled dish before, but it sounded important—even legendary—and its cool creaminess was welcome on that particularly humid holiday in southern Alabama."

Brooke Bell
VP Culinary & Custom Content



"Growing up, all my cousins would come over for a reindeer cookie-decorating contest. We'd gather around the kitchen table—with the spiced aroma of freshly baked gingerbread lingering in the air—to adorn our Dashers, Dancers, Comets, and Blitzens with colorful designs. I can still see us now, hands (and usually clothing) covered in icing smatters, proudly holding up our cookie masterpieces."

Sophia Jones
Managing Editor

"It's not necessarily a baking memory, but it's still sweet. My mom would always order special sugarplums from the Vermont Country Store catalog for us to eat on Christmas Eve night, right before going to bed and waiting for Santa. They're rich dark chocolate truffles that had a sophisticated fruity finish. She still orders them for me—no Christmas is complete without them."

Kyle Grace Mills
Associate Editor

"Every year, my parents took my sister and me to stay at my grandparents' house for the weeks leading up to the holiday. My grandmother always kicked off the season by baking gingerbread men (and women!) for my sister and me to decorate. The three of us would make a whole day of it, icing 'clothes' onto the gingerbread people, giving them gumdrop buttons, and even piping accessories like handbags or jewelry."

Lillie Mermoud
Assistant Editor

"Every Christmas for as long as I can remember, my whole family gets together to bake Italian *cuccidati* and biscotti. We sing and yell (we're Italians after all) and eat so much raw cookie dough Mimi threatens that we won't even have enough to bake. And while the cookies are still my most favorite holiday treat, the best part of the day is getting in the kitchen with my crazy, noisy family and arguing over who gets to put their hands in the cookie dough. (It's usually me.)"

Alex Kolar
Editorial Assistant

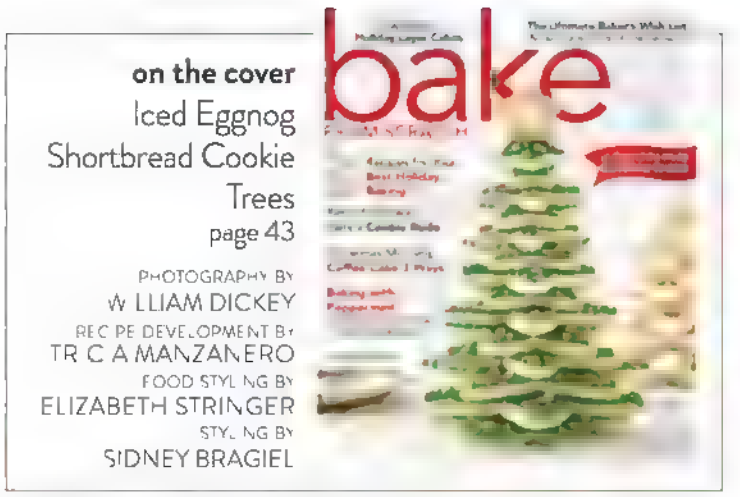
"Growing up, in the chaos of cooking Christmas Eve dinner and getting ready for midnight Mass, my family would bake my Grandmom Lundberg's from-scratch peanut butter blossoms and snickerdoodles for Santa. As the years went on, everyone got busier and we started using cookie mixes. But this Christmas, we're going back to my grandmother's recipes, continuing the tradition in her honor and teaching my nieces and nephews to bake them, too."

Meg Lundberg
Copy Editor

"When I was growing up, my mom put a different twist on decorating Christmas cookies beyond the traditional icing and sprinkles. She would dye egg yolks so my brother and I could paint our Christmas sugar cookies all sorts of fun colors. Christmas baking with my mom has evolved beyond sugar cookies now, but I believe these craft projects began the love of art I have today!"

Kelly Redding
Art Director

RECIPE INDEX



on the cover
Iced Eggnog Shortbread Cookie Trees
page 43

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BARS AND COOKIES

Casadinhos **97**
"Food for the Gods" Bars **97**
Glazed Fruitcake Cookies **23**
Iced Eggnog Shortbread Cookie Trees **43**
Italian Rainbow Cookies **98**
Jam-Filled Kolaczki Cookies **96**
Lebkuchen **110**
Mulled Spice Brownies **112**
Spiced Cranberry-White Chocolate Blondies **45**
Viennese Sandwich Cookies **96**

BREAD

Almond Cranberry Wreath **25**
Herbed Fontina Rolls with Marinara Sauce **45**
Persimmon Scones **87**
White Chocolate-Peppermint Sweet Rolls **79**

CAKES

Burnt Sugar Cake **67**
Cinnamon Persimmon Cake **88**
Classic Bûche de Noël **50**
Cranberry Citrus Coffee Cake **105**
German Chocolate Cake **66**
Gingerbread Bûche de Noël **51**
Gingerbread Coffee Cake **106**
Italian Cream Cake **65**
Mama's Greek Cake **32**
Mulled Apple Coffee Cake **105**
Peppermint Swirl Pound Cake **77**
Persimmon Ginger Upside-Down Cake **87**
Red Velvet Cake **67**
Sour Cream Coffee Cake **104**
Spiced Fruitcake **65**
Two-Tier Orange-Ginger Pound Cake **43**

FROSTINGS, FILLINGS, GARNISHES, AND GLAZES

Almond Cream **25**
Almond Streusel **104**
Brandy Simple Syrup **65**
Brown Sugar Buttercream **51**
Burnt Sugar Syrup **67**
Caramel Sauce **21, 105**
Cherry-Port Buttercream **96**
Chocolate Buttercream **50**
Citrus Glaze **106**
Coconut Pecan Filling **66**
Cold Brew Simple Syrup **50**
Cream Cheese Frosting **65**
Cream Cheese Glaze **77**
Cream Cheese Icing **79**
Creamy Chocolate Frosting **66**
Crème Fraîche Caramel **86**
Crunchy German Buttercream **32**
Ermine Icing **67**
Fruit Filling **66**
Ganache Frosting **112**
Hazelnut Streusel **106**
Honey Buttercream **88**
Maple Glaze **88**
Marinara Sauce **46**
Molasses Simple Syrup **51**
Orange French Buttercream **11**
Orange Glaze **25**
Pecan Streusel **105**
Penuche Icing **67**
Peppermint Pastry Cream **78**
Rum Drizzle **24**
Rum Sugar Glaze **110**
Sour Cream Glaze **104**
Spiced Port Syrup **112**
Spiked Royal Icing **44**
Vanilla Bean Buttercream **50**
Vanilla Buttercream **65**
Vanilla Glaze **43**
Walnut Crisp Topping **86**
Walnut Streusel **106**
White Chocolate Frosting **45, 80**

MISCELLANEOUS

Mulled Spice Mix **112**
Simple Salted Peppermint Bark **80**
Sugared Persimmons **88**

PASTRIES, PIES, AND TARTS

Orange Paris-Brest **11**
Pecan Caramel Tassies **21**
Peppermint Cream Puffs **77**
Persimmon-Apple Crisp **86**
Triple-Chocolate Peppermint Tart **79**
Vanilla Slice **5**

THE BAKER'S ULTIMATE *Holiday Gift List*

WE SEARCHED THE MARKET FAR AND WIDE TO BRING YOU THE BAKER'S DEFINITIVE WISH LIST OF MUST-HAVE KITCHEN EQUIPMENT, INGREDIENTS, AND COOKBOOKS. IN THE SPIRIT OF GIVING, WE'RE SHARING THE SEASON'S SWEETEST HOMEMADE GIFTS TO BESTOW UPON YOUR NEAREST AND DEAREST, TOO.

FESTIVE FOODS

GIFT YOUR LOVED ONES HOMEMADE GOODIES, OR AMP UP YOUR BAKING WITH THESE FLAVOR-PACKED INGREDIENTS

1. THE EDITOR'S EGGNOG

Treat your nearest and dearest to the go-to eggnog recipe of our editor-in-chief, Brian Hart Hoffman. Brian makes it every year for his closest friends and family, and this year, he's letting our readers in on his special recipe. Striking the perfect balance between warm spice and sweet custard, this velvety eggnog is delicious spiked with brandy or bourbon or even added to coffee.
Find the recipe at *bakefromscratch.com/editors-eggnog*.

2. SANDEMAN PORTO FOUNDER'S RESERVE RUBY PORT

Get a little boozy with your baking by adding a dash of this ruby port to your favorite chocolate, nut, and winter fruit recipes. Bursting with a complex cherry flavor, Sandeman's Founder's Reserve Ruby Port is the secret ingredient behind the deep, sophisticated notes of our Mulled Spice Brownies (page 112). Sip on a snifter of this fortified wine as you bake to make your holiday extra merry and bright.
Available at your local liquor store or online.

3. LEBKUCHEN

Hailing from Germany, lebkuchen are tender, cakey cookies packed with spice and coated in an irresistible rum glaze. In other words, they're the ultimate holiday cookies. Spread some cheer by giving a tin of these cookies to the host of your next holiday party, or ship them to your loved ones for a sweet and festive gift.
Find our recipe and read more about the story behind lebkuchen on page 107.

4. HEILALA VANILLA FLAVORED EXTRACTS

The official vanilla of *Bake from Scratch*, Heilala Vanilla produces some of the finest vanilla on the market, grown and hand-harvested on their farms in the Kingdom of Tonga. Now, this New Zealand-based company is expanding their product line to include six revolutionary flavored extracts. Available in cocoa, coffee, berry, pumpkin spice, oak-aged vanilla, and peppermint, these extracts will elevate your favorite baked goods the Heilala way.
***heilalavanilla.com*, individual extracts for $19.97, a set of 6 for $110**

5. SIMPLE SALTED PEPPERMINT BARK

We're taking this timeless homemade gift from ordinary to extraordinary by sprinkling our rich peppermint bark with sea salt to complement the chocolate and bring out its decadent flavor. We use this peppermint bark on our Triple-Chocolate Peppermint Tart to finish it off with effortless holiday flair.
Find the recipe on page 80.

LAIT PUR DE NORMANDIE
Le bon lait
SANDEMAN
PINK RUBY
Heilala
Heilala
Heilala
Heilala
1
2
3
4
5

KITCHEN ESSENTIALS

FROM REVOLUTIONARY BAKING PANS TO STUNNING SERVING DISHES AND INDISPENSABLE TOOLS, THESE PRODUCTS WILL TAKE YOUR BAKING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

1. JOHN WHAITE NEST OF 3 STACKED BOWLS BY FENELLA SMITH

With a cleverly designed lip that makes pouring batter easy and mess-free, these gold-rimmed ceramic nesting bowls are essentials in our editor-in-chief's baking pantry. Produced by Fenella Smith, a leading artisan in London, England, the elegant and minimalistic design was dreamed up in partnership with John Whaite, the series 3 winner of *Great British Bake Off* and a close friend of *Bake from Scratch*.
***fenellasmith.com*, £60**

2. WILLIAMS SONOMA COPPER HOLIDAY COOKIE CUTTERS

These elegant cookie cutters aren't just for show. The premium solid copper allows for easy release from the dough and ensures clean-cut edges while also giving the cutters a timeless look that'll never go out of style. Break them out when you're baking for your next cookie swap to have the most eye-catching treats at the party.
***williams-sonoma.com*, $9.95 each**

3. EMILE HENRY CROWN BREAD BAKER

Crafted in France from high-fired Burgundian clay, this ringed pan makes bread-baking approachable. Simply place your favorite bread dough in the mold, set the lid on top, and place the mold in the oven. You'll be turning out impressive and easy pull-apart brioche, sweet yeast rolls, and so much more.
***emilehenryusa.com*, $130**

4. ANNIEGLASS ROMAN ANTIQUE SQUARE CAKE PLATE

Display your baked goods on a surface that's just as stunning as your sweets. Crafted with a gleaming precious metal rim, this handmade glass cake plate will bring modernity and sophistication to your holiday soirée.
***annieglass.com*, $263**

5. LE CREUSET TART DISH

The French standard for bakeware, Le Creuset's stoneware dish distributes heat evenly, yielding beautiful tarts with golden crusts and not a soggy bottom in sight. This sturdy dish can go from freezer to oven to table, all while giving your recipes a touch of elegance.
***lecreuset.com*, $50**

6. DANSK KOBENSTYLE BUTTER WARMER

Inspired by simple Scandinavian design, this petite pan is made of Dansk's signature Kobenstyle enameled carbon steel. Its small size and nonstick coating make it the perfect vessel for melting butter or reducing spiced port for our Mulled Spice Brownies (page 112). The best part? You won't get burned reaching for this pan. That teak handle stays cool even after long periods of simmering.
***lenox.com*, $39.95**

7. NORDIC WARE SNOWFLAKE PAN

Make your one-layer cakes merry and bright with this beautifully detailed holiday cake pan. Backed by a lifetime warranty, this nonstick pan is created with the same expert craftsmanship and attention to detail that has made Nordic Ware one of the world's premier and most-trusted makers of bakeware.
***nordicware.com*, $40**

8. SILPAT SILICONE PERFECT COOKIE BAKING MAT

Your holiday cookie-baking just got easier. Equipped with this stenciled silicone baking mat, you'll turn out uniform cookies every time. Made in France, Silpat's signature fiberglass and silicone mesh blend also keeps your cookies from sticking and promotes even baking. Use it when baking our Casadinhos (page 97) for flawless sandwich cookies
***williams-sonoma.com*, $29.95**

LOPEZ
WEEKNIGHT BAKING
BIGGER BOLDER BAKING
GEMMA STAFFORD
JOANNE CHANG
Pastry Love
ROUND CAKES
83
THE
COOKIE
COLLECTION
– 128 –
RECIPES FOR
THE COOKIE
ENTHUSIAST
BRIAN HART HOFFMAN
THE NEW WAY TO CAKE
Brontë at home
Brontë Aurell
MIDWEST MADE
SHAUNA SEVER

THE SEASON'S SWEETEST READS

WE'RE DREAMING OF UNWRAPPING THESE NEW COOKBOOK RELEASES BY THE PASTRY QUEEN OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, A RENOWNED SCANDINAVIAN RESTAURATEUR, AND OUR OWN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

1. *THE COOKIE COLLECTION*

By Brian Hart Hoffman (83 Press, 2019)
Introducing the first *Bake from Scratch* ode to cookies! From luscious sandwich cookies to game-changing chocolate chip cookies, this tome is filled with unique recipes that are near and dear to our editor-in-chief's heart, as well as epic recipes contributed by our friends in the baking community around the world.

2. *MIDWEST MADE: BIG, BOLD BAKING FROM THE HEARTLAND*

By Shauna Sever (Running Press Adult, 2019)
In this love letter to Midwestern baking, renowned cookbook author and Chicago, Illinois, native Shauna Sever shares comforting recipes from her homeland, like flaky Cornish pasties, a German-inspired peach pavlova, and cherry slab pie. Each reflects the heartland's international culinary influences and down-home style.

3. *BRONTË AT HOME: BAKING FROM THE SCANDI KITCHEN*

By Brontë Aurell (Ryland Peters & Small, 2019)
Co-owner and founder of the popular ScandiKitchen Café in London, England, Danish restaurateur Brontë Aurell makes her cookbook debut with this homage to Scandinavian food traditions. Whether you go for chewy Daim Cookies or her decadent apple pie, these recipes will reinvigorate your baking with Scandinavia's signature warmth and simplicity.

4. *THE NEW WAY TO CAKE: SIMPLE RECIPES WITH EXCEPTIONAL FLAVOR*

By Benjamina Ebuehi (Page Street Publishing, 2019)
A quarterfinalist on series 7 of *Great British Bake Off*, Benjamina Ebuehi is known for her minimalist and modern desserts that make the most of seasonal produce. From a plantain upside-down cake to a chai-infused carrot cake, this cookbook showcases Benjamina's style through a collection of approachable cakes packed with bold flavor.

5. *ULTIMATE POUND CAKES: CLASSIC RECIPE COLLECTION*

By Phyllis Hoffman DePiano (83 Press, 2018)
Running the gamut from rustic sour cream pound cakes to chocolate-swirled stunners, this cookbook by Phyllis Hoffman DePiano—the owner and founder of Hoffman Media, and our editor-in-chief's mother—celebrates traditional pound cakes, contemporary caramel-glazed beauties, and everything in between.

6. *PASTRY LOVE: A BAKER'S JOURNAL OF FAVORITE RECIPES*

By Joanne Chang (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019)
This long-awaited collection by Joanne Chang, the James Beard Award-nominated pastry chef behind Flour bakeries in Boston, Massachusetts, is her most personal cookbook yet. You'll find some best sellers from the bakery, like Joanne's sought-after sticky buns, but the book is also full of the must-have recipes she bakes at home. Don't miss her Mocha Chip Cookies or homey strawberry pie.

7. *WEEKNIGHT BAKING: RECIPES TO FIT YOUR SCHEDULE*

By Michelle Lopez (Simon & Schuster, 2019)
Brought to you by the blogger behind *Hummingbird High*, this book will be your go-to when weeknight cravings call. It's packed with indulgent recipes that can easily fit into your busy schedule, from decadent fudgy brownies to a showstopping red velvet layer cake, and even includes tips and kitchen hacks to whip them all up in a flash.

8. *BIGGER BOLDER BAKING: A FEARLESS APPROACH TO BAKING ANYTIME, ANYWHERE*

By Gemma Stafford (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019)
Bake up satisfaction on demand with this beautifully photographed volume by Gemma Stafford, the pastry chef behind *biggerbolderbaking.com*. Gemma shares her favorite decadent yet effortless recipes—velvety chocolate pies, cozy cinnamon buns, and zesty lemon bars—that require only 10 ingredients or less and are guaranteed to come together with minimal effort.

Pecan Caramel Tassies

Offering sweet and simple satisfaction, there's no denying that pecan tassies are a holiday must-bake. Sunnyland Farms Small Pecan Pieces are the secret ingredient behind these rich bites, adding irresistible crunch to the pecan pie filling and nutty notes that harmonize with the luscious caramel topping. Sprinkled with a pinch of sea salt, these classic treats will go so fast at your next holiday party that you may want to bake a double batch.

Makes 24

- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 3 ounces (86 grams) cream cheese, softened
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract, divided
- 1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt, divided
- ¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
- ¼ cup (42 grams) light corn syrup
- 1 tablespoon (14 grams) unsalted butter, melted
- 1 large egg (50 grams)
- ¼ cup (90 grams) Sunnyland Farms Pecan Pieces
- Caramel Sauce (recipe follows)
- Garnish: Sunnyland Farms Pecan Pieces, flaked sea salt

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat softened butter and cream cheese at medium speed until smooth. Beat in ½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour and ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt, beating until combined. Shape dough into a disk, and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

2. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 24-cup mini muffin pan with cooking spray.

3. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough to about ⅛-inch thickness. Using a 2¾-inch round cutter, cut dough, rerolling scraps as needed. Place a round in each prepared muffin cup, pressing into bottom and up sides. Freeze while preparing filling. (Alternatively, divide dough into 24 portions [about 16 grams each]; roll into a ball, and press into bottom and up the sides of each muffin cup, trimming excess dough as needed.)

4. In a medium bowl, whisk together brown sugar, corn syrup, and melted butter until smooth. Add egg and remaining ¼ teaspoon kosher salt, whisking until combined.

5. Sprinkle pecan pieces evenly in each prepared crust. Pour egg mixture over pecans, filling each cup three-fourths full.

6. Bake until filling is set and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 200°F (93°C), about 25 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Place Caramel Sauce in a piping bag. Cut a ¼-inch opening, and pipe Caramel Sauce on top of pecan filling. Garnish with pecan pieces and sea salt, if desired.

Note: *Dough can be made ahead of time. If chilled for a long period of time, let dough stand at room temperature for 15 to 20 minutes before rolling.*

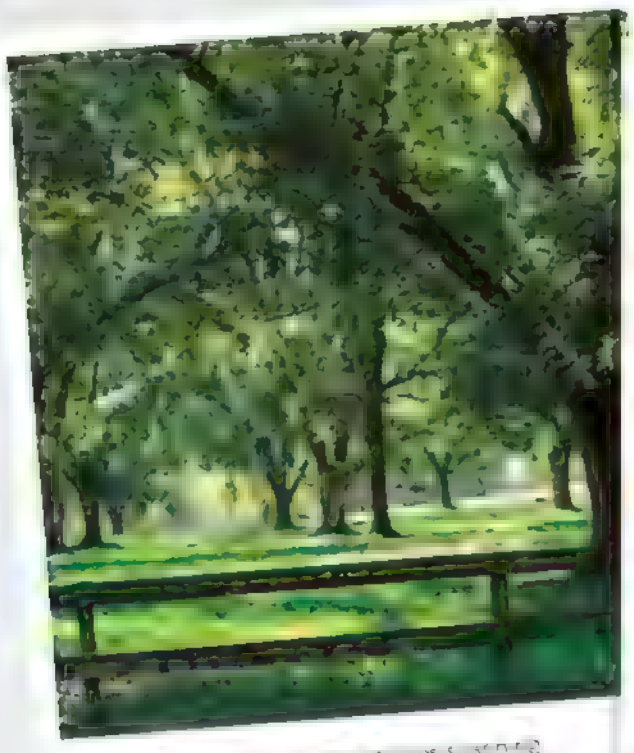
Caramel Sauce

Makes about 1⅓ cups

- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 4 tablespoons (60 grams) water, divided
- ½ cup (120 grams) warm heavy whipping cream
- 6 tablespoons (84 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened

1. In a medium saucepan, heat sugar and 3 tablespoons (45 grams) water over medium heat until sugar is dissolved. Increase heat to high, and use remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water to brush down sides of pan. (Do not stir once it starts to boil.) Cook until desired light amber color is reached. Remove from heat; slowly add warm cream, whisking to combine. Add butter, a few pieces at a time, whisking until combined. Let cool completely.

Sunnyland Farms



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Family-owned and operated since 1948, Sunnyland Farms is committed to producing the highest-quality nuts you'll find anywhere.

Guaranteed fresh, our famous pecans are grown on our farm in Albany, Georgia—the Pecan Capital of the World—and shipped to you from our on-site production facility.

Our pecans are world famous for their rich flavor and large size. In addition, our selection of everything from almonds to hazelnuts is sure to add just the right amount of nutty crunch you need to take your baking projects to the next level.

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FRUITCAKE COOKIES

OUR EDITOR-IN-CHIEF CARRIES ON A FAMILY HOLIDAY TRADITION BY BAKING HIS GRANDFATHER'S FRUITCAKE COOKIES, MADE WITH A BOX MIX. WE REVAMPED THE STORE-BOUGHT VERSION AS A FROM-SCRATCH RECIPE BAKED WITH JUST AS MUCH LOVE AND A LITTLE BIT OF RUM, TOO.

It's funny how the holidays can turn someone who doesn't bake into the most enthusiastic of bakers. My grandfather baked only two recipes I was aware of his entire life: pecan pie and his holiday fruitcake cookies, which were a Norton (my mom's family) holiday essential.

Each year leading up to the season, Grandad prepared his fruitcake cookies for our family. It's a simple recipe, with boxed spice cake mix, chopped pecans, and crumbled Claxton Fruit Cake. He learned it during his days in Civitan nternational, a community service organization based in his hometown of Birmingham, Alabama, which sells Claxton Fruit Cake around the holidays as a fundraiser. After baking several batches, my grandfather would lovingly arrange the cookies in a white cookie tin decorated with carousel horses—you can see it pictured in the photo on the next page—and pass the tin around to the whole family. The combination of warm spices from the cake mix, the pecans, and the dried fruit in the fruitcake always tasted like the holidays to me.

About five years ago, I realized that as the baker in the family, I would be responsible for keeping this tradition alive, so I started visiting my grandparents before the holidays to bake the cookies with my grandfather. The recipe was easy enough for me to grasp with one quick read-through, but I still let him teach me every step of the process. After all, the holidays are about the time you spend with those you love. Visiting my grandparents to bake for the holidays became a tradition I looked forward to every year.

Grandad passed away last year, and now, I'm especially thankful for those special moments we spent in the kitchen, talking, baking, and laughing with each other. Since he isn't with us to make his cookies for the holidays, I make them instead, not just to carry on the family tradition but also to relive the sweet memories I have with my grandfather.

—Brian Hart Hoffman, editor-in-chief

THE REDO

GLAZED FRUITCAKE COOKIES

Makes about 36 cookies

Studded with candied fruit and spiked with rum, these tender cookies are the from-scratch version of Brian's grandfather's cookies. We finished them off with a Rum Drizzle to make them extra merry. From our family to yours, these cakey cookies are sure to become a part of your own holiday traditions.

- **1¼ cups (300 grams) spiced rum**
- **½ cup (100 grams) finely chopped candied red cherries**
- **½ cup (100 grams) finely chopped candied green cherries**
- **½ cup (87 grams) finely chopped dried pineapple**
- **½ cup (83 grams) finely chopped crystallized ginger**
- **½ cup (85 grams) finely chopped candied orange**
- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **1¾ cups (350 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) rum extract**
- **3½ cups (438 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground nutmeg**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground ginger**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves**
- **1 cup (113 grams) chopped toasted pecans**
- **Rum Drizzle (recipe follows)**

1. In a medium microwave-safe bowl, combine spiced rum, cherries, pineapple, crystallized ginger, and orange, and heat on high until hot, 2 to 3 minutes; let stand at room temperature for at least 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Drain fruit mixture. Set aside.
2. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 4 baking sheets with parchment paper.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, 1¼ cups (250 grams) granulated sugar, and brown sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in rum extract.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, salt, nutmeg, cinnamon, ground ginger, and cloves. Add flour mixture to butter mixture all at once; beat at low speed just until combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Fold in fruit mixture and pecans. (Dough will be sticky.)
5. Place remaining ½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar on a rimmed plate. Using a 2-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and shape into balls (42 grams each). Roll in sugar, and place 1½ to 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Using the palm of your hand, gently flatten balls to 1-inch thickness.
6. Bake until light golden brown and set around the edges, about 12 minutes. Let cool on pans for 3 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Place Rum Drizzle in a piping bag, and cut a ¼-inch opening in tip. Drizzle onto cooled cookies.

Rum Drizzle

Makes about ½ cup

1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
1½ tablespoons (22.5 grams) heavy whipping cream
1 tablespoon (15 grams) spiced rum
2 teaspoons (10 grams) unsalted butter, melted
¼ teaspoon kosher salt

1. In a medium bowl, stir together all ingredients until smooth. Use immediately.

ALMOND CRANBERRY WREATH

This celebratory bread gets its tender, pillowy texture from Platinum® Yeast from Red Star®, the go-to yeast for baking success every time.

Makes 1 wreath

4¼ to 4½ cups (531 to 563 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) Platinum Yeast
2 teaspoons (6 grams) kosher salt
½ cup (120 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water, divided
½ cup (120 grams) whole milk
½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
2 large eggs (100 grams), divided
1 large egg yolk (19 grams)
1 tablespoon (3 grams) orange zest
1 cup (120 grams) fresh or thawed frozen cranberries, halved (patted dry if frozen)
Almond Cream (recipe follows)
Orange Glaze (recipe follows)

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine 2 cups (250 grams) flour, sugar, Platinum Yeast, and salt.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat ½ cup (120 grams) water, milk, butter, and vanilla over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add warm milk mixture to flour mixture, and beat at medium speed until combined and cooled slightly, 2 minutes. Add 1 egg (50 grams), egg yolk, and orange zest, and beat at medium speed until combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add 2¼ cups (281 grams) flour, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl
3. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at low speed until a soft, somewhat sticky dough forms, about 12 minutes, stopping to scrape dough hook and sides of bowl. Add up to remaining ¼ cup (31 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if dough is too sticky.
4. Lightly oil a large bowl. On a lightly floured surface, shape dough into a smooth round. Place dough in bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 40 minutes to 1 hour.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining 1 egg (50 grams) and remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water.
6. Lightly punch down dough. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface, and roll into a 24x12-inch rectangle. Using a small offset spatula, spread Almond Cream onto dough, leaving a ½-inch border on one long side. Sprinkle with cranberries. Brush border with egg wash. Starting with opposite long side, roll up dough, jelly roll style; pinch seam to seal. Gently shape log to even thickness, if necessary. Trim edges flat. Place log on a sheet of parchment paper. Form dough into a circle. Brush trimmed ends with egg wash, and press together, pinching dough to seal.
7. Using a serrated knife or kitchen scissors, cut three-fourths of the way into dough, being careful not to cut all the way through dough. Make a second cut 1 inch from first cut. Repeat process around the circle until you reach first cut. Gently turn each slice onto its side, slightly overlapping with the previous piece. Slide parchment onto a baking sheet. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until puffed, 20 to 30 minutes.
8. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Brush egg wash onto dough.
9. Bake until lightly golden and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 30 to 45 minutes, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Let cool on pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and drizzle with Orange Glaze. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Almond Cream

Makes about 1¾ cups

6 tablespoons (84 grams) unsalted butter, softened
½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
1⅓ cups (128 grams) natural almond meal
1 large egg (50 grams)
¼ teaspoon (1 gram) almond extract
½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon kosher salt

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes. Beat in almond meal until combined. Add egg and almond extract, beating on low until combined. Beat in flour and salt. Refrigerate until ready to use

Orange Glaze

Makes about ½ cup

1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon (1 gram) orange zest
1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons (25 grams) fresh orange juice

1. In a small bowl, whisk together all ingredients until smooth.

Visit redstaryeast.com/platinum

All the best parties begin in the kitchen. And your holiday celebrations are made even warmer whenever you share fresh-baked goodness with family and friends. Using Platinum Yeast from Red Star sets you free to savor all the joys of the season knowing every recipe will come out of the oven light and airy — perfect for your holiday guests. The natural dough strengtheners in Platinum Yeast ensure a more consistent rise, more baking confidence and more time to enjoy all your made-from-scratch moments this season.

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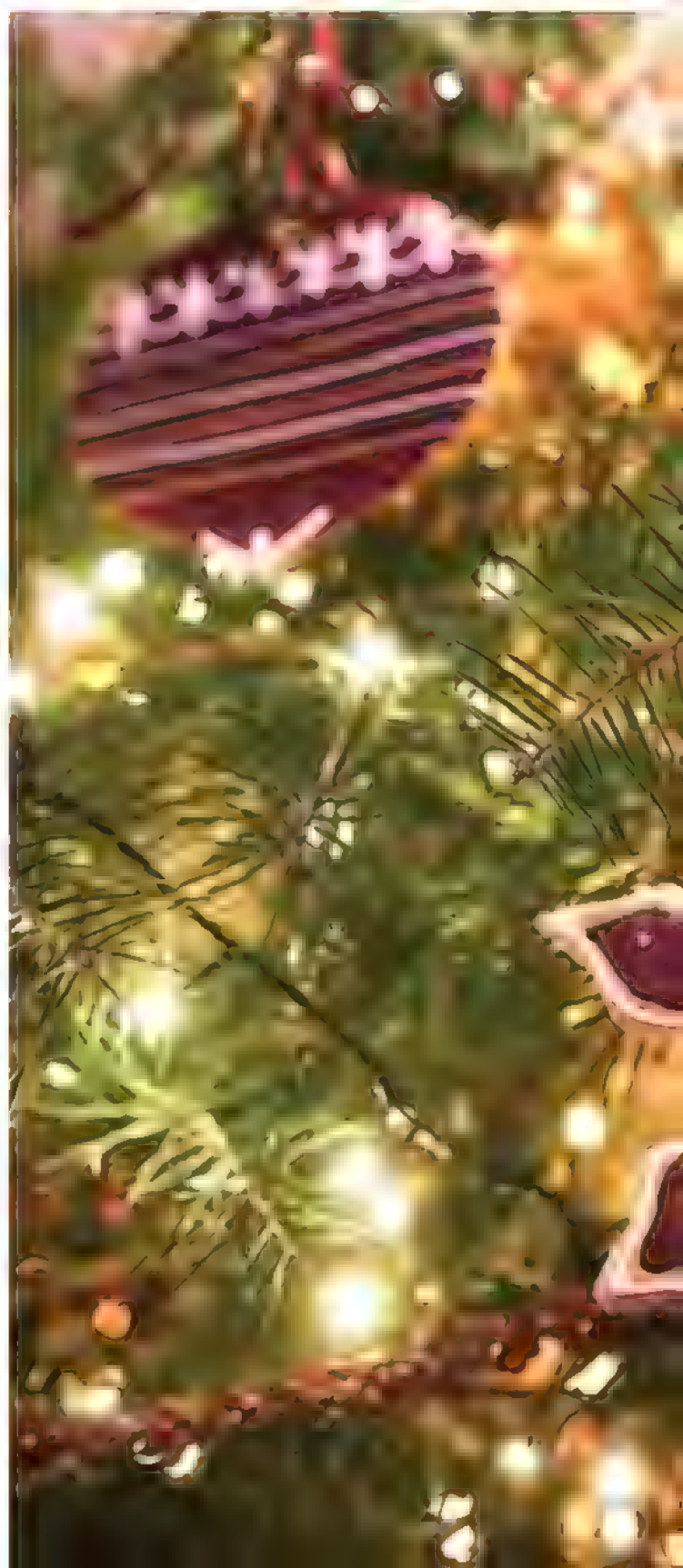
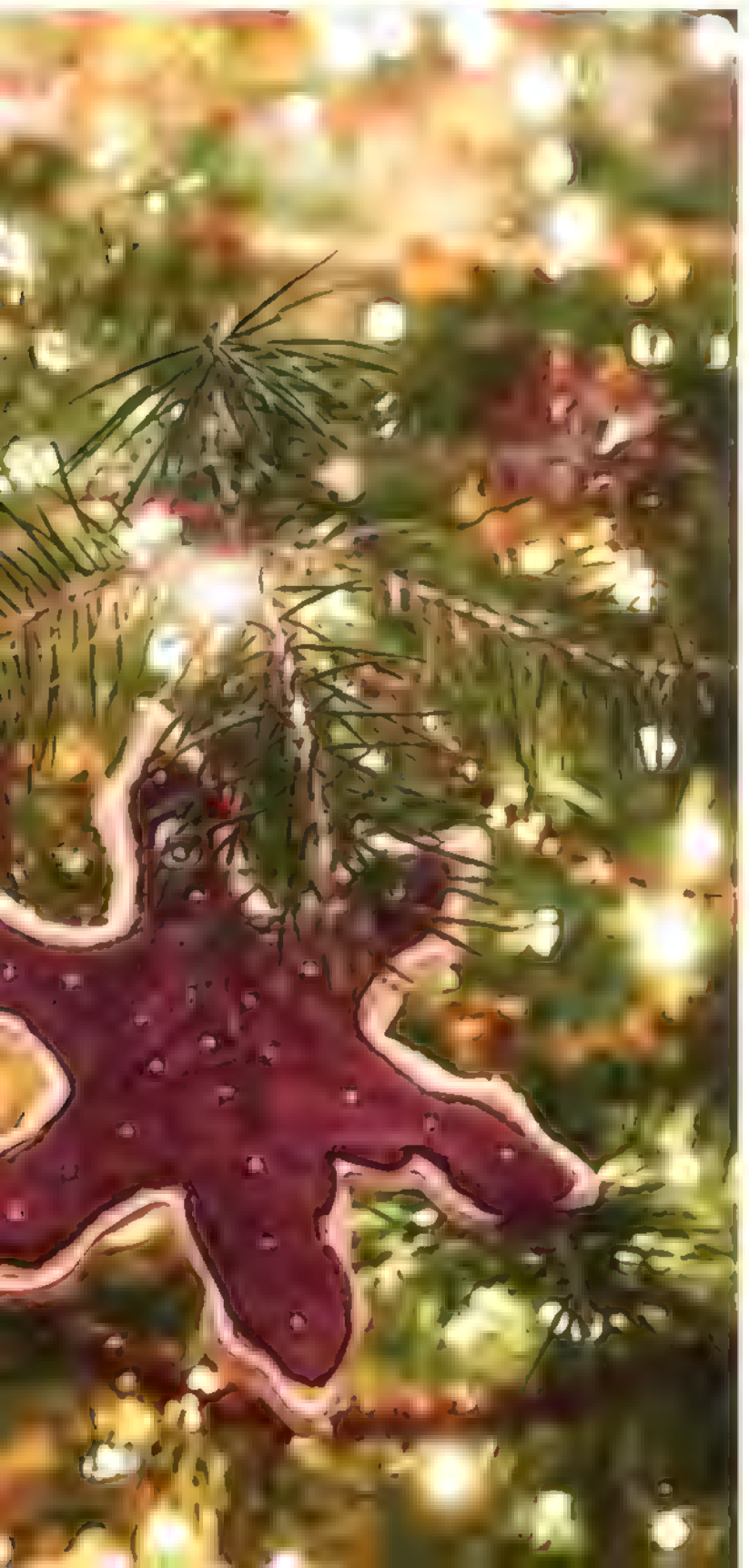




HOLIDAY BAKING WITH MIRO USKOKOVIC

THE PASTRY CHEF AT GRAMERCY TAVERN SHARES HOME RECIPES AND HIS INSPIRING STORY

BY KYLE GRACE MILLS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE KATZ

> It's Gramercy Tavern's 25th Christmas, and the restaurant casts an inviting glow. You'll have the distinct feeling you've been transported to the candlelit magic of a Dickensian Christmas, a warm, nostalgic harbor in modern-day New York, New York.

The halls are decked. The renowned in-house floral team has adorned the restaurant with ruby red roses, pomegranates, and holly berries; verdant kissing balls hang from the exposed beams; and an ever-changing harvest table hosts a golden cornucopia of metallic-hued artichokes, walnuts, pears, and grapes. In the corner is a bar-top Christmas tree adorned with lights, beads, and more than 100 intricately detailed cookie ornaments. The cookies smell richly of peppermint and vanilla, and each one sports a magnificent design iced by pastry chef Miro Uskokovic and his merry band of pastry pros.

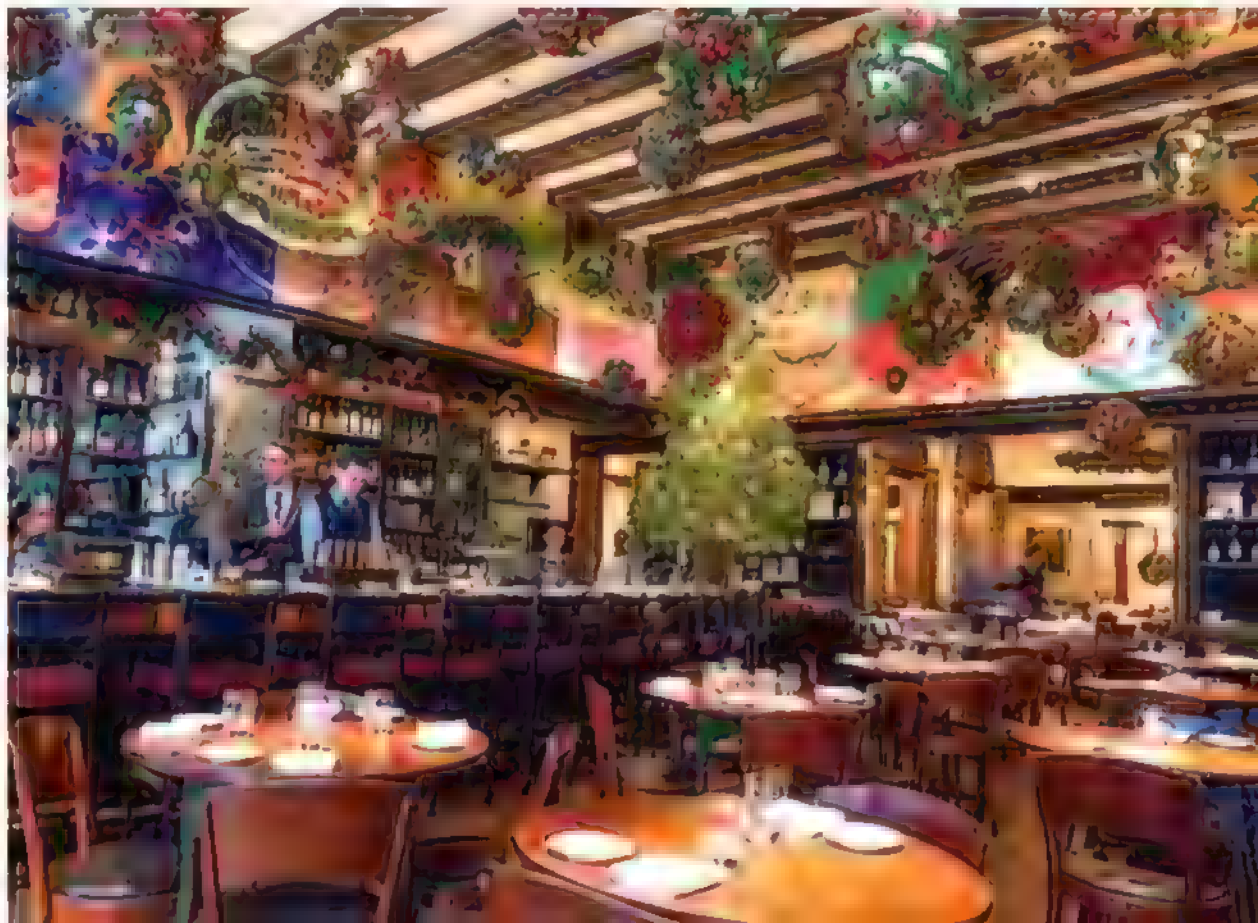
The elegant edible ornaments are a mere shadow of Miro's grand hand at work. Dinner at Gramercy Tavern is a multicourse affair, and every single guest will have a taste of one of his creations. On one night, you could choose something like his tender browned butter cake served with pear and blue cheese mousse. Or perhaps you'll go with the always satisfying, eternally classic Gramercy Tavern Cookie Plate with Milk, a roundup of his rotating assortment of cookies served with a glass of milk, or if it's during the holiday season, a Chocolate Martini, spiked with amaretto and vodka and poured piping hot from a teapot. Miro himself revamped this dish, deciding to highlight new cookies every season with exciting, revolutionary ingredients and pairing them with a glass of milk with an iconic red-striped straw. But you can always expect that the baked goods will reflect a blend of his two great influences: his Serbian upbringing and his American culinary education.

Growing up on a small farm in the former Yugoslavia (now Vrbas, Serbia) the diligent process of harvesting, preserving, and preparing food was an essential skill for survival. "This is where my love for food—and homemade, local food in particular—comes from," Miro says. An average day included pickling cabbage and preserving sour cherries at his grandmother's elbow; raising cows, pigs, goats, and chickens; and making charcuterie with his siblings. Even though the bleak Yugoslav Wars raged from the time Miro was 7 to 17, he notes that this time at home was made precious through his family's indominable spirit and resourcefulness. "I had a very happy childhood. My siblings, my family, myself—we made the most of it."

Despite his natural affinity for the culinary arts, Miro went to college for an education in hospitality. "In Serbia, being a chef is considered a blue-collar job. My family wanted more for me," he says. Of course, fate has a way of intervening. When his mother was diagnosed with cancer in 2004, Miro moved back home, quitting college a year shy of graduating. In the final year of his mother's life, Miro spent time with her in the kitchen, cooking and baking recipes she had scrawled in family cookbooks. Miro began to explore sweet territory he'd always considered too intimidating to master. "I thought, 'She's here, she's with me, and she knows everything about cakes.' With her guidance, I finally had the courage to try to make a cake," he shares.

Of significance was the first cake Miro ever baked, her Greek cake. "I have no idea why it was called the Greek cake—it has nothing at all to do with Greece. It's like a financier cake, a lot of butter and egg whites but with ground walnuts used in place of almonds. Its frosting was a German buttercream, which is made with egg yolks rather than egg whites. But what made it so special is she would fold in chopped Crunch Bars to the frosting. There was this sudden craze for American candy bars in Serbia in the late '90s because once the Yugoslav Wars were over, all of these novelty American brands started to arrive. So, I don't know how other families would make their cake, but this was my mother's version," Miro says.

Miro's mother passed away in 2005, but that precious time spent together had set Miro on a new path. "It was a long battle for me, but I finally accepted that food was what I loved," he says. Miro returned to the United States and settled in Indiana, where he had previously spent a year during a high school exchange program. He found himself at the bakery Pastry Diva, experiencing



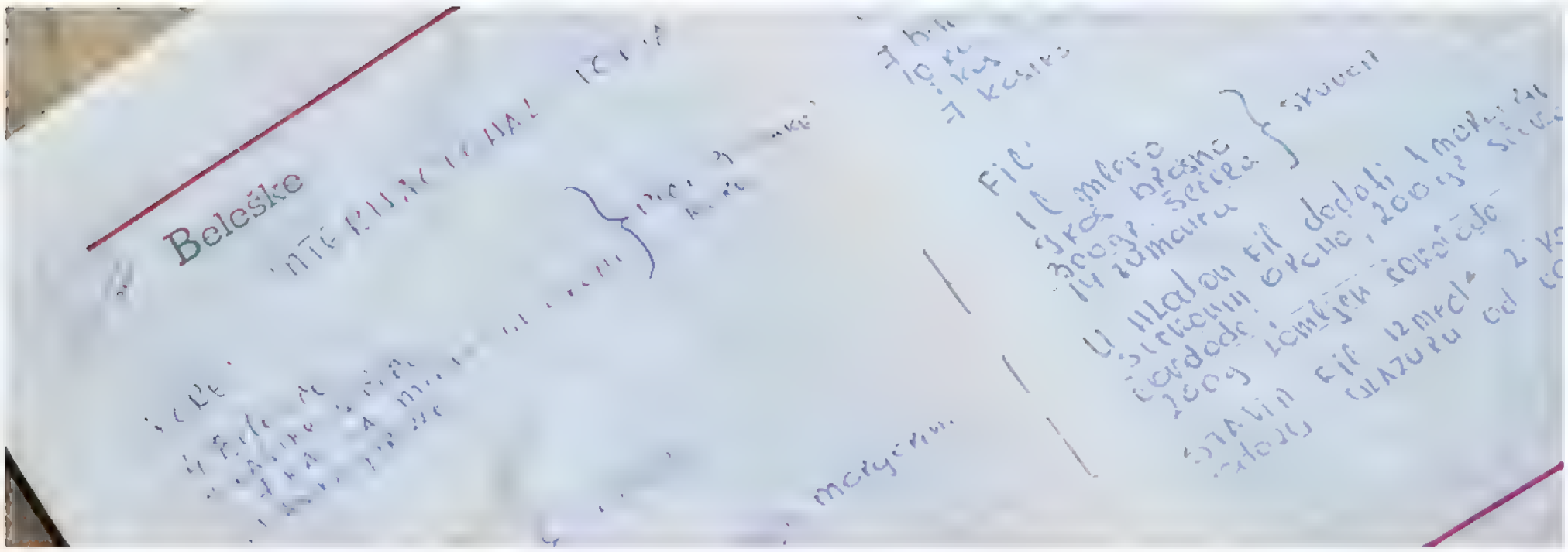
firsthand Americans' passion for butter and sugar. "It was a very different kind of baking than the European style taught to me by my mother. America is very butter- and sugar-forward," he says with a laugh. By 2008, he had enrolled in the Culinary Institute of America, earning a culinary degree before deciding to focus completely on pastry. It's been a winding path of fabulous restaurants since then, with Miro finally finding his home at Gramercy Tavern in 2013.

The pastry program at Gramercy Tavern is a fine-tuned machine, courtesy of Miro. He's an ideal example of that unusual breed of pastry chef: highly creative yet deftly organized. He manages a pastry team of nearly 20, starting his early mornings by color coding schedules and itemizing sprawling grocery lists. "If you burn a steak, you can fix that mistake in 10 minutes and grill another backup steak. Pastry does not have that benefit," he says. He remains in humble awe of his accomplishments. "It's been nearly seven years here, and I still feel like I'm faking it."

After all this time, Miro finds one of the great pleasures of continuing to work at Gramercy Tavern is the long line of holiday traditions. "Every year, the day after Thanksgiving, we close one night and turn the Tavern into a holiday wonderland. For our part, the pastry team turns on Christmas music and makes and decorates about 100 to 120 cookies." Beyond that tasty rite, Gramercy Tavern has a whole slew of holiday celebrations that Miro oversees. There's the annual employees' pie-baking challenge, during which members of the Gramercy team present pies to Gramercy Tavern head chef Michael Anthony and visiting culinary judges and friends of Miro's, like cookbook authors Erin Jeanne McDowell and Rose Levy Beranbaum and our editor-in-chief, Brian Hart Hoffman. Plus, this season, Gramercy Tavern will be inviting past pastry chefs to add special desserts in honor of its 25th anniversary.

Christmas at Miro's home is a sentimental but no less grand affair. The yuletide season has always been a time that calls to mind his family and his mother, whose birthday is December 27. At his Queens home with his wife, Shilpa, he'll make a number of baked goods that reflect what his mother would serve for an afternoon tea. First is a savory ode to a bûche de Noël, featuring a spinach chiffon cake filled with paprika and smoked salmon mousse and frosted with whipped feta cheese with pickled peppers. This may seem an odd addition to the table, but savory cakes are common appetizers served in Eastern Europe. Next is a spin on a Russian salad, with little tartlets filled with a chilled mélange of peas, carrots, potatoes, pickles, mayonnaise, and ham. Finally, there's the Greek cake, that very first cake he baked with his mother all those years ago.

The way Miro revisits his mother's recipes every Christmas, making minor tweaks to and putting little twists on baked goods that are intrinsic to his identity, explains the continued success he brings to Gramercy Tavern's pastry menu. "What I bake tastes new yet familiar," Miro says. Because what's the holiday season without a touch of sweet nostalgia?



MAMA'S GREEK CAKE

Makes 1 (8 inch) cake

Hailing from Miro Uskokovic's family recipe book, this cake is a slight twist on his mother's Greek cake. While the original was five layers cut from a sheet pan and made with walnuts, Miro has made the recipe more friendly for American home bakers by making a more traditional four-layer cake and calling for a homemade pecan meal. What hasn't changed? The egg yolk-rich and candy bar-packed frosting that makes this cake so special.

2 cups (250 grams) bleached cake flour
2 cups (283 grams) whole toasted pecans
12 large egg whites (360 grams)
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
¼ teaspoon cream of tartar
1½ cups (300 grams) granulated sugar, divided
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, melted
3 tablespoons (63 grams) golden syrup*
Crunchy German Buttercream (recipe follows)
Garnish: chopped crisped rice milk chocolate candy bars*

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Lightly spray bottoms of 2 (8-inch) deep-sided round cake pans with cooking spray; line bottoms with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a food processor, process flour and pecans until combined and pecans are finely ground. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites, salt, and cream of tartar at medium-low speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Gradually add ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar. Increase speed to medium, and beat for 2 to 3 minutes. Gradually add remaining ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar, and beat until glossy, medium-firm peaks form, 10 to 15 minutes. Add baking powder, and beat for 30 seconds.
4. In a small bowl, whisk together warm melted butter and golden syrup. With mixer on low speed, add butter mixture to egg white mixture in a slow, steady stream, beating just until combined. (Don't overmix—the fat will deflate the egg whites.) Using a whisk, fold in flour mixture, scraping bottom and sides of the bowl. Divide batter between prepared pans.
5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean and cakes bounce back when lightly touched, 25 to 35 minutes. Let cool completely in pans on wire racks. Remove from pans, and wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate overnight. (Refrigerating overnight is not essential—just make sure the layers are cold, which makes for easier cutting.)
6. Cut each cake layer in half horizontally. Place 1 layer on a cake turntable or flat plate. Using an offset spatula, spread about 2 cups Crunchy German Buttercream on top. Repeat layers twice. Place final cake layer, flat side up, on top of buttercream. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.
7. Spread remaining Crunchy German Buttercream on top and sides of cake. Garnish with chopped candy bars. For the best flavor, make the cake the day before, cover and let stand overnight.

**I used Lyle's Golden Syrup and Crunch Bars.*

Crunchy German Buttercream

Makes about 8 cups

13 large egg yolks (240 grams)
¼ cup (31 grams) all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon plus ¾ teaspoon (10 grams) cornstarch
2½ cups (600 grams) whole milk
½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (112 grams) granulated sugar
1½ teaspoons (4.5 grams) kosher salt
1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste
2 cups (454 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon (97 grams) confectioners' sugar
6.5 ounces (182 grams) chopped crisped rice milk chocolate candy bars (about 4 bars)
⅔ cup plus 2 tablespoons (97 grams) whole toasted pecans, chopped

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together egg yolks, flour, and cornstarch until smooth and well combined.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat milk, granulated sugar, and ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) salt over medium heat just until bubbles form around the edges of pan. Slowly pour about 1 cup warm milk mixture into egg yolks mixture, whisking constantly. Pour mixture back into saucepan, whisking constantly. Bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking constantly. Reduce heat to low, and cook, whisking constantly, for 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and stir in vanilla bean paste. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium bowl. Cover with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until an instant-read thermometer registers 65°F (18°C) to 70°F (21°C), 2½ to 3 hours.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Add confectioners' sugar and remaining 1 teaspoon (3 grams) salt, beating until light and creamy.
4. Switch to the whisk attachment. Add pastry cream; beat at medium speed until smooth, fluffy, and pale yellow. Using a silicone spatula, gently fold in candy bars and pecans. Use immediately.

MULLING SPICES

THIS SPICE BLEND IS THE BEST WAY TO BRING WARM HOLIDAY CHEER TO YOUR BAKING

BY KYLE GRACE MILLS
STYLING BY CAROLINE BLUM

Take a sip of a steaming cup of mulled wine and you're greeted with the warmth of mulling spices, an aromatic heat that works its way from the tip of your nose to your toes.

As long as there has been wine, there has been mulled wine, a hearth-warmed, well-spiced drink that, for centuries, everyone from the ancient Greeks to the Vikings enjoyed during the chilly winter months. The wine itself was not so important —in fact, the starter for mulled wine was often unpalatable and bitter. What transformed the simple vino into the magical hot brew was a highly aromatic spice blend and, occasionally, sugar. This alchemical mix of mulling spices has varied widely over the years, from age to age and culture to culture. Here, we trace it from its dubious medicinal origins to its sweet future as baking spice extraordinaire.

In ancient Rome, a mulled wine recipe might have been spiced with saffron and bay leaves and sweetened with dates. But once the Venetians began their extensive trade with the Ottoman Empire in the 13th century, the spice blend began to feature a modern mix of usual suspects—cinnamon, cloves, allspice, nutmeg, and black pepper. The Romans brought it to the conquered Germanic and Celtic peoples, and they, in turn, transformed it into their own hot spiced wine traditions. In Germany, glühwein (which translates to "glow wine") is heavy on the cloves, cinnamon, and oranges, though allspice and star anise occasionally make the cut. Throughout Scandinavia, you can expect glogg, a mulled punch comprised of wine, rum, and bourbon, plus oodles of cardamom, the Nordic spice of choice. One of the oldest ancestors of plain mulled wine is hippocras, a medieval favorite that was regarded as both a delicious drink and a miraculous health tonic—a lofty claim, though many spices, like ginger, clove, and cinnamon, have anti-inflammatory properties.

An apple cider spinoff of mulled wine enjoyed in the British Isles, wassail also makes use of sugar and mulling spices. Drinking a cup represents celebrating a successful apple harvest or, for our more modern age, hoping for a personally bountiful new year (the word comes from the Middle English toast *wæs hæil*, or "be in good health"). Wassail has spawned the act of—what else?—wassailing, a singing and drinking spectacle that resembles a more boisterous version of caroling. It also inspired our Mulled Apple Coffee Cake (page 105). In the 17th and 18th centuries, dried and fresh citrus became a common addition to the mix as Europeans gained regular access to oranges, lemons, and limes.

It's no surprise that mulling spices help create liquid cheer, but how exactly can it elevate your baking? Much like the pumpkin pie, chai, and Chinese five-spice blends, mulling spices are an incredibly versatile pantry staple

that bring out the best in everything, from fall fruit pastries like apple pie to creamy, custardy desserts like cheesecake. First, consider adding mulling spices to poaching liquids. If you're poaching pears, figs, or apples, add some of the blend to the mix. If reducing wine or port into a reduction glaze, like for our Mulled Wine Brownies (page 112), add mulling spices while cooking it down so they punctuate the fruity flavor of the reduction.

A mulling spices-infused simple syrup is also an easy and rewarding baking staple to have on hand. Melt 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar in 1 cup (240 grams) water, and steep 1 tablespoon (6 grams) mulling spices in the liquid for 30 minutes. Refrigerate, and add it to buttercreams or cocktails, or brush it directly onto baked cake layers to create a more tender and flavorful cake. A sachet of the blend can add pronounced holiday warmth to custards like crème anglaise or to a homemade jam or jelly like tart cranberry jam.

With ground mulling spices, the sky's the limit. Incorporate a pinch of it into your fillings, frostings, and glazes to bring the spice right to the forefront of a dessert. Pop the blend into your everyday shortbread to give it a touch of warm whimsy, or use it to introduce complex heat to a standard peanut butter cookie. Toss the spice blend with your sliced apples and pears in your favorite pie recipe. Sprinkle it in with a final dusting of confectioners' sugar, giving your simple cakes a soft sense of spice. Finally, just stir it into a cake batter to create a sophisticated spice cake, or add it directly to streusel for a new spin on the usual cinnamon-based swirl.

Why the romantic association of mulled wine and Christmas? Look no further than Charles Dickens. The great British author was such a fan of Smoking Bishop, a mulled wine-and-port cocktail, that it made its way into his holiday classic, *A Christmas Carol*. A newly reformed Ebenezer Scrooge offers Smoking Bishop to his employee, Bob Cratchit. The mulled drink is a rich gift for the impoverished Cratchit and is one more tangible example of Scrooge's transformation from miser to merry-maker. In other words, mulled wine and its signature spice blend have become an enduring symbol of yuletide generosity. Anything that tastes of it has a taste of that giving spirit.

GIFT IT!

A jar or packet of homemade a mulling spice blend is an excellent gift for friends and family during the holiday season. Place your larger spices (like cinnamon sticks, star anise, or cardamom) in a large resealable plastic bag and coarsely crush with a rolling pin. Then add a blend of whole cloves, allspice, dried citrus rind, and peppercorns to the mix. Seal in a half-pint Mason jar or glass container of similar size. With or without a ribbon, it'll be the sweetest-smelling present by a long shot.

BAKE WITH MULLING SPICES
In this issue, don't miss:

Viennese Sandwich Cookies, page 96
Mulled Apple Coffee Cake, page 105
Mulled Wine Brownies, page 112

THE MANY MULLING SPICES

Depending on the variation, a mulling spice blend can contain any or all of the following spices. Here's a little background on each of the aromatic ingredients.

Cinnamon: Cinnamon is the dried inner bark of a cinnamon tree. Once cut from the tree, it'll curl up as it dries, forming its signature coiled stick shape. A popular spice since the time of ancient Egypt, cinnamon is often featured in mulling spice recipes and is one of the predominate flavors.

Nutmeg: The seed of a *Myristica fragrans*, nutmeg was not as commonly used in medieval recipes for mulled wine because of its rarity and steep price. Once it became readily available in the 19th century, many home cooks gladly added it into the mix.

Clove: An extremely pungent spice, clove is the dried, undeveloped flower bud of a tree in the myrtle family. Because clove has such strong aromatic oils and compounds—its concentrated oil is often used in numbing mouthwash—it should be added in conservative doses to spice mixes.

Allspice: So called because it contains the aromatic qualities of several spices (clove, cinnamon, and nutmeg) in one, allspice is the dried whole berry of *Pimenta dioica*, a canopy tree found in the Caribbean and Central America. It packs a powerful punch and should be used sparingly.

Star anise: Bringing the much-desired note of licorice to the mulling spice mix, the multipointed star anise is the pericarp of the fruit of the *Illicium verum* tree found in China and Vietnam. An essential ingredient in Chinese five-spice powder, star anise can be simmered whole in a poaching liquid or ground into a powder.

Peppercorns: Though you may consider peppercorns a strictly savory spice, black pepper has had a long history as the hot counterpart to many sweet-smelling spice mixes. Freshly ground or popped whole into a mulling mix, peppercorns will add warmth without competing with the stronger spices.

Cardamom: One of the most common ingredients found in mulling spice mixes, cardamom has often been dubbed "the queen of spices," and for good reason. An essential ingredient to chai spice mixes, cardamom can be simmered in liquid whole or added to spice mixes as ground seeds.

Ginger: Original recipes for mulling spice mixes featured many relatives of ginger, from grains of paradise to galangal. Today, fresh ginger is more commonly used in the cooking of mulling spices (it will mellow and sweeten once heated), while ground ginger is used in the powdered blends. Keep in mind that ground ginger is more pungent than fresh.

Citrus: As essential to the mulling mix as any spice, citrus, particularly orange or lemon, brings a note of contrary tartness and acidity to the sweetened wine and aromatic spices, cutting through all the rich flavors for a bright, balanced finish.

O Tannenbaum

TREE-SHAPED BAKING

Two-Tier Orange-Ginger Pound Cake
page 43

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE
FOOD STYLING BY ELIZABETH STRINGER / STYLING BY SIDNEY BRAGIEL

FROM A TWO-TIER CITRUS POUND CAKE TO FROSTED CRANBERRY-STUDDED BLONDIES, THESE FIR-INSPIRED BAKED GOODS ARE CUT, STACKED, AND ARRANGED TO RESEMBLE ONE OF THE MOST MEANINGFUL EMBLEMS OF THE SEASON

Spiced Cranberry-White Chocolate Blondies
page 45

Herbed Fontina Rolls with Marinara Sauce
page 45

Decorating Techniques

TO GIVE OUR COOKIE TREE (RECIPE ON PAGE 43) EVEN MORE VISUAL APPEAL, WE CREATED THREE ICING DESIGNS FOR THE COOKIES. HERE, WE BREAK DOWN THE STEPS FOR EACH DESIGN SO YOU CAN RECREATE THE LOOK.

CORNER DOTTING

Pipe a small dot onto a corner tip. Pipe a small heart shape or "V" directly underneath, touching the first dot. Repeat for all points of the star. Let dry until hardened, about 1 hour.

STARBURST

Pipe an outline around the edge of the star. Starting from the center of the cookie, pipe a straight line to a point. Repeat for all points of the star. Let dry until hardened, about 1 hour.

SPRINKLE OUTLINE

Pipe a straight line along the edge of each section of the star and then carefully cover freshly piped line with sprinkles. (Piping and sprinkling in segments ensures the sprinkles stick before the icing can harden.) Repeat until sprinkle outline covers every edge of the star. Let dry until set, about 1 hour. Gently shake off excess sprinkles.

cover recipe

Iced Eggnog Shortbread Cookie Trees
page 43

For the cookies on our cover, we used gel food coloring to tint our Spiked Royal Icing green. Use gel food coloring to tint your cookies any color you like. To achieve this shade of green icing, tint Spiked Royal Icing with 1 to 2 teaspoons Wilton Gel Icing Color in Kelly Green.

TWO-TIER ORANGE-GINGER POUND CAKE

Makes 1 (10-cup) and 1 (6-cup) Bundt cake

This glimmering beauty gives a whole new meaning to the term "layer cake." Nordic Ware's Heritage Bundt Pan, which comes in two perfectly stackable sizes, provides the ideal shape for a plethora of garnishes. A luscious Vanilla Glaze and a light dusting of confectioners' sugar cascade down the concentric edges, and a smattering of metallic sprinkles rests in the sloping channels. With orange zest and both freshly grated and ground ginger in the batter, this two-tier masterpiece tastes as incredible as it looks.

2 cups (454 grams) unsalted butter, softened
3 cups (600 grams) granulated sugar
1 tablespoon (9 grams) packed orange zest
4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature
4 cups (500 grams) all-purpose flour
1¾ teaspoons (5.25 grams) kosher salt
1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground ginger
¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking soda
1 cup (240 grams) whole milk, room temperature
2 tablespoons (30 grams) grated fresh ginger
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
Vanilla Glaze (recipe follows)
Assorted gold sprinkles (optional)
Star-shaped sugar cookie*, for topping
Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C)
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, granulated sugar, and orange zest at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until well combined after each addition; scrape sides of bowl as needed.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, ground ginger, and baking soda. In a medium bowl, whisk together milk, grated ginger, and vanilla. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition.
4. Spray a 10-cup and a 6-cup Nordic Ware Heritage Bundt Pan with baking spray with flour. Spoon 5¼ cups (about 1,236 grams) batter into prepared 10-cup pan; spoon remaining batter (about 788 grams) into prepared 6-cup pan. Tap pans on counter several times to spread batter into grooves and release any air bubbles
5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted near center comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes for the 6-cup pan and 55 minutes to 1 hour for the 10-cup pan. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Gently loosen center and edges from pans using a small offset spatula. Invert cakes onto wire racks; let cool completely.
6. Transfer 10-cup Bundt cake to desired serving plate. Place Vanilla Glaze in a large piping bag fitted with a ¼-inch round piping tip (Wilton No. 12). Carefully pipe glaze into and over grooves of cake. Once glaze stops dripping, decorate with sprinkles (if using). On a separate plate or cake board, repeat glazing process with 6-cup Bundt cake, and decorate with sprinkles (if using); stack on top of 10-cup Bundt cake. Trace over ridges of cakes with glaze, pausing briefly at various points to create a drip effect. Top 6-cup cake with a 3- to 3½-inch star-shaped cookie (see PRO TIP), and dust with confectioners' sugar.

**See Iced Eggnog Shortbread Cookies below.*

Vanilla Glaze

Makes 1¾ cups

5 cups (600 grams) confectioners' sugar
⅓ cup (80 grams) whole milk
2 tablespoons (30 grams) fresh orange juice
1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract*
¼ teaspoon kosher salt

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together all ingredients until smooth. Use immediately.

**We used Heilala Pure Vanilla Extract.*

PRO TIP
To help keep the star cookie upright, stick a wooden skewer through the cake and lean the cookie against the skewer. Remove before serving

ICED EGGNOG SHORTBREAD COOKIE TREES

Makes 2 cookie trees (30 cookies)

Stars aren't just for topping the tree. Turns out, the shape is perfect for stacking to create your most eye-catching centerpiece yet. We let our favorite holiday drink inspire the flavor for these tender, delicately spiced shortbread. You'll love the little kick from the spiced rum.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar
1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature
1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) spiced rum
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
3¼ cups (406 grams) all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons (10 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground nutmeg
Spiked Royal Icing (recipe follows)
2 tablespoons (30 grams) water
Garnish: assorted sprinkles

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a large bowl, beat butter and confectioners' sugar with a mixer at medium speed until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg, rum, and vanilla, beating until combined.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until a dough forms.
4. Divide dough in half; cover one half with plastic wrap. On a lightly floured surface, roll uncovered dough to ¼-inch thickness. Using 5 graduated-size, star-shaped cookie cutters*, cut out 3 cookies for each size, rerolling scraps as needed. Repeat with remaining dough. (Each tree will have 15 cookies.) Working in batches and using a small offset spatula, place cookies, sorted by size, at least ½ inch apart on prepared pans.
5. Bake until edges are just beginning to brown, 7 to 10 minutes. Let cool on pans for 1 minute. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Transfer about 1 cup (206 grams) Spiked Royal Icing to a small bowl; add 2 tablespoons (30 grams) water, stirring until icing is flood-consistency. (If icing is too thick, add more water, and if it's too thin, add more confectioners' sugar. For reference, flood-consistency icing has the appearance of runny honey.) Dip tops of cooled cookies into flood-consistency Spiked Royal Icing, letting excess drip off. Let stand until dry, at least 4 hours. (Don't rush this process—if you start to move your cookies or ice with new details, you'll risk smudging.) Spoon 1 cup (206 grams) Spiked Royal Icing into a small piping bag fitted with a small round piping tip (Wilton No. 2) or cut a ⅛-inch opening. Pipe desired decorations onto dipped cookies. (See Decorating Techniques on page 41.) Refill piping bag as needed. Garnish with sprinkles, if desired. Let stand until dry, at least 1 hour.
7. For first set of 15 cookies, start with largest star and stack cookies in order of size, spiraling them so points do not line up; use Spiked Royal Icing as an adhesive, piping a little icing onto the center point of each cookie before layering with the next. Stand final cookie upright as a tree topper, securing with Spiked Royal Icing. (To help top cookie stand up, gently grate bottom points until flat and dot with icing before securing to the top of the tree.) Repeat procedure with second set of 15 cookies.

**Our largest cookie was 5 inches, and our smallest cookie was 1 inch. We like Williams Sonoma Stainless-Steel Star Biscuit 5-Piece Cookie Cutter Set*

Note: *Any leftover flood-consistency icing can be stored in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 3 months.*

Make Ahead:
Store cookies in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If icing, let icing dry and harden completely before storing

Spiked Royal Icing

Makes 2½ cups

3¾ cups (450 grams) confectioners' sugar
2½ tablespoons (22.5 grams) meringue powder*
6 tablespoons (90 grams) warm water (80°F/26°C to 105°F/41°C)
¾ teaspoon (3.75 grams) spiced rum
¾ teaspoon (3 grams) vanilla extract

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat confectioners' sugar, meringue powder, 6 tablespoons (90 grams) warm water, rum, and vanilla at low speed until well combined. Increase speed to medium; beat until mixture is the consistency of toothpaste, 3 to 5 minutes. (See Note). Use immediately. (See PRO TIP.)

**Find meringue powder at Michaels or your local craft store.*

Note: *Use gel food coloring to tint your Spiked Royal Icing. Gel food coloring won't affect the icing's consistency like liquid food coloring does. For green icing, tint Spiked Royal Icing with 1 to 2 teaspoons Wilton Gel Icing Color in Kelly Green.*

PRO TIP
It's the nature of royal icing to harden and dry out. If you're not using it immediately, cover the top of your icing with a damp paper towel to keep it fluid and fresh, but for no more than 1 hour. You can also put the icing in an airtight container.

SPICED CRANBERRY-WHITE CHOCOLATE BLONDIES

Makes 10 blond es

Don't be a square this holiday season. We spruced up the traditional blondie formula with some spices, white chocolate, and cranberries. Topped with a velvety White Chocolate Frosting, these bars will be on your to-bake list all year long.

- **1½ cups (330 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, melted and cooled**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), room temperature**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground nutmeg**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground ginger**
- **¼ teaspoon ground cloves**
- **5 ounces (150 grams) white chocolate baking bars, roughly chopped**
- **½ cup (78 grams) roughly chopped dried sweetened cranberries**
- **White Chocolate Frosting (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: assorted holiday sprinkles**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter a 9-inch square baking pan; line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together brown sugar and melted butter until well combined; whisk in eggs and vanilla.
3. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, and cloves. Fold flour mixture into sugar mixture just until combined. Fold in white chocolate and cranberries Spoon batter into prepared pan; spread into an even layer using a small offset spatula.
4. Bake until golden brown and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with just a few moist crumbs, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack.
5. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Cut in half, creating 2 rectangles. Cut each half into 5 triangles with 3-inch bases
6. Place White Chocolate Frosting in a large piping bag fitted with an open star piping tip (Wilton 1M); pipe frosting onto cooled blondies, working from tip to base of each triangle. Garnish with sprinkles, if desired.

White Chocolate Frosting

Makes 2½ cups

- **⅔ cup (150 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **7.5 ounces (215 grams) white chocolate baking bars, melted and cooled for 5 minutes**
- **1¼ cups (150 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **¼ teaspoon vanilla extract**
- **⅛ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **Green gel food coloring***

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Beat in melted white chocolate. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until combined. Add vanilla and salt; increase speed to medium, and beat until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Stir in enough food coloring until desired color is reached. Use immediately.

**We used Wilton Gel Icing Color in Kelly Green and Juniper Green.*

HERBED FONTINA ROLLS WITH MARINARA SAUCE

Makes 23 rolls

Perfect for sharing and packed with melty fontina cheese and a quartet of aromatic herbs, these yeasted potato rolls will chase away even the coldest of winter chills. Fluffy, buttery, and savory but with a touch of sweet from honey, they make for a fun appetizer or side for your holiday spread.

- **3 to 3¼ cups (381 to 413 grams) bread flour, divided**
- **3 tablespoons (6 grams) finely chopped fresh basil, divided**
- **1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) active dry yeast***
- **1¾ teaspoons (5.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) garlic powder**
- **2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme, divided**
- **2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh oregano, divided**
- **2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary, divided**
- **½ cup (120 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) whole milk, divided**

- **10 tablespoons (140 grams) unsalted butter, softened and divided**
- **½ cup (122 grams) plain, cooked, and mashed potatoes**
- **3 tablespoons (63 grams) honey**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams), divided**
- **5.75 ounces (161 grams) fontina cheese**
- **Marinara Sauce (recipe follows), to serve**
- **Garnish: flaked sea salt, crushed red pepper**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine 1 cup (127 grams) flour, 2 tablespoons (4 grams) basil, yeast, kosher salt, garlic powder, 1 teaspoon thyme, 1 teaspoon oregano, and 1 teaspoon rosemary until well combined

2. In a medium saucepan, combine ½ cup (120 grams) milk and 6 tablespoons (84 grams) butter; cook over medium heat until butter is melted and an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add milk mixture to flour mixture; beat at medium speed for 2 minutes. Add potatoes, honey, and 1 egg (50 grams); beat at medium-high speed for 2 minutes. With mixer on medium-low speed, gradually add 2 cups (254 grams) flour, beating just until combined.

3. Switch to the dough hook attachment; beat at medium-low speed for 4 to 6 minutes, adding up to remaining ¼ cup (32 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, until a smooth, elastic dough forms. (Dough should pass the windowpane test [see Note]; scrape sides of bowl and dough hook as needed.)

4. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray; place dough in bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 40 minutes to 1 hour.

5. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Cut cheese into 0.25-ounce (7-gram) cubes.

6. Punch down dough. Turn out dough, and divide into 23 portions (about 35 grams); cover with a piece of plastic wrap. (You should not need much additional flour, if any.) Flatten 1 piece of dough, and place 1 cheese cube in center; pinch dough closed, and gently shape into a ball, pressing together any seams, if needed. Repeat with remaining dough. Place balls, seam side down, on prepared pan in a Christmas tree shape, starting with 2 balls for the trunk and 6 balls for the first row; reduce each following row by 1 ball, leaving a ¼-inch gap between each. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 40 minutes to 1 hour.

7. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).

8. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining 1 egg (50 grams) and remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) milk; brush onto rolls.

9. Bake until golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center registers 190°F (88°C), 15 to 20 minutes.

10. In a small bowl, stir together remaining 4 tablespoons (56 grams) butter, remaining 1 tablespoon (2 grams) basil, remaining 1 teaspoon thyme, remaining 1 teaspoon oregano, and remaining 1 teaspoon rosemary. Brush herb butter onto rolls Serve warm with Marinara Sauce. Garnish with sea salt and crushed red pepper, if desired.

Note: *Test the dough for proper gluten development using the windowpane test. Pinch off (don't tear) a small piece of dough. Slowly pull the dough out from the center. If the dough is ready, you will be able to stretch it until it's thin and translucent like a windowpane. If the dough tears, it's not quite ready. Beat for 1 minute more, and test again.*

**We used Red Star® Active Dry Yeast.*

Marinara Sauce

Makes 1½ cups

- **1 tablespoon (14 grams) olive oil**
- **6 cloves garlic (30 grams), minced**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) tomato paste**
- **1 (15-ounce) can (425 grams) crushed tomatoes**
- **2 tablespoons (4 grams) chopped fresh basil**
- **2 teaspoons (14 grams) honey**
- **1¼ teaspoons (3.75 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground black pepper**

1. In a small saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and tomato paste; cook, stirring frequently, for 2 minutes. Add tomatoes, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer for 10 minutes. Stir in basil, honey, salt, and pepper.

the essential...

BÛCHE DE NOËL

FROM MASTERING GENOISE SPONGE CAKE TO CRAFTING MUSHROOMS FROM MERINGUE, OUR GUIDE TO CREATING THIS HOLIDAY ROULADE WILL HELP YOU ACHIEVE YULE LOG PERFECTION

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT BY LAURA CRANDALL
FOOD STYLING BY ELIZABETH STRINGER

This is a tale of two logs, one a pagan ritual and the other the Christian baker's edible reimagining. The original Yule log was a special stump of wood pagan families would burn during the Yule season to bring fortune and good luck. Over time, this pagan rite was absorbed by the Christian celebration of Christmas, and the need for the log became more of a symbolic tradition. Nineteenth-century French pastry chefs shrewdly adapted this symbol into a delectable piece of pastry illusion, a decadent cake masquerading as freshly cut tree log. One of the earliest recipes recorded for the bûche de Noël is from Pierre Lacam's cookbook *Le mémorial historique et géographique de la pâtisserie*. Genoise sponge cake was cut into rounds and sandwiched together with chocolate cream, forming a cylindrical log, and finally adorned with green almond paste leaves and finely chopped pistachios. Eventually, it transformed into the roulade we know today, but it has kept its iconic shape in homage to its ancient, uh, roots.

The elements required for crafting a proper bûche de Noël are a genoise sponge that is light and elastic but still a joy to eat; a simple syrup to moisten said genoise sponge, ensuring it stays tender during its time as the holiday centerpiece, and to enhance the sponge's flavor profile; and a rich buttercream filling and outer coat that must be sweeter than the sponge cake but not cloying, and firm enough to withstand slicing and styling. Finally, there is the whimsical decoration: handcrafted chocolate bark, cocoa-dotted mushroom-shaped meringues, nutty pistachio moss, and a delicate frost of confectioners' sugar. Our two bûche de Noëls—one delightfully traditional and one radically vertical—bring all this and more to the table. Follow along so you can create your own version of the ultimate Christmas centerpiece.

CLASSIC BÛCHE DE NOËL

Makes 1 bûche de Noel

Our bûche de Noël is a proper holiday centerpiece. With a stiff buttercream filling and moist syrup-soaked genoise, it can be stored in the refrigerator a day before decorating.

- **¼ cup (21 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder, plus more for dusting**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) hot water**
- **3 ounces (86 grams) 60% cacao bittersweet chocolate, melted**
- **5 large eggs (250 grams)**
- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**
- **2 large egg yolks (37 grams)**
- **¾ cup (94 grams) cake flour**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **Cold Brew Simple Syrup (recipe follows)**
- **Vanilla Bean Buttercream (recipe follows)**
- **Chocolate Buttercream (recipe follows)**
- **Meringue Mushrooms (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: ground pistachios, confectioners' sugar**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray an 18x13-inch rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray; line pan with parchment paper, and spray pan again.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together cocoa and ¼ cup (60 grams) hot water until dissolved. Add melted chocolate, and whisk until smooth.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together eggs, granulated sugar, and egg yolks by hand. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer registers 110°F (43°F), about 5 minutes. Return bowl to stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, and beat at high speed until thick and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes
4. In a medium bowl, place about 2 cups egg mixture. Fold in warm chocolate mixture. Set aside
5. In a small bowl, sift together flour and salt. Using a large balloon whisk, gently fold flour mixture into remaining egg mixture in two additions just until combined. Fold in chocolate mixture. Fold in warm melted butter in two additions. Using an offset spatula, quickly and gently spread batter evenly in prepared pan.
6. Bake until cake starts to pull away from sides of pan, 10 to 12 minutes. Loosen cake from sides of pan, if needed. Invert onto a tea towel dusted with cocoa. Gently peel off parchment. Starting with one long side, roll up cake and towel together. Let cool completely on a wire rack.
7. Carefully unroll cake, and brush with Cold Brew Simple Syrup. Spread with Vanilla Bean Buttercream. Reroll cake without towel, and place, seam side down, on a baking sheet, using towel as a sling. Cover with towel, and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.
8. Trim ends of cake flat. Trim 3 to 4 inches diagonally from one end; set aside. Trim a ¾-inch slice from same end; set aside. Place large cut piece at an angle off side of cake, and attach with Chocolate Buttercream. Place small cut piece, angle cut side up, on top, and attach with Chocolate Buttercream. Spread remaining Chocolate Buttercream on outside of cake. Use an offset spatula to create detailed bark ridges. Decorate with Meringue Mushrooms; garnish with ground pistachios and confectioners' sugar, if desired.

Cold Brew Simple Syrup

Makes about ⅔ cup

- **¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) water**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) cold brew coffee**

1. In a small saucepan, bring sugar and ¼ cup (60 grams) water to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat, and stir in coffee. Let cool completely. Store in an airtight contatainer in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

Vanilla Bean Buttercream

Makes about 3 cups

- **3 large egg whites (90 grams), room temperature**
- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved**
- **1¼ cups (284 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together egg whites, sugar, and reserved vanilla bean seeds by hand. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer registers 155°F (68°C) to 160°F (71°C)
2. Carefully return bowl to stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, and beat on high until bowl is cool to the touch, about 8 minutes. Add butter, 2 tablespoons (28 grams) at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Beat in salt. Use immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If refrigerating, let stand at room temperature for 2 hours and rewhip until smooth before using.

Chocolate Buttercream

Makes 2 cups

- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **3 tablespoons (15 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder**
- **⅓ cup (80 grams) sour cream**
- **2½ cups (300 grams) confectioners' sugar**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add cocoa, beating until combined. Beat in sour cream until smooth. Gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until smooth and creamy. Use immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If refrigerating, let stand at room temperature for 2 hours before using.

Meringue Mushrooms

Makes about 24 mushrooms

- **2 large egg whites (60 grams)**
- **¼ teaspoon cream of tartar**
- **⅛ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (40 grams) dark chocolate melting wafers, melted according to package directions and cooled slightly**
- **Cocoa powder, for dusting**

1. Preheat oven to 275°F (140°C). Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites, cream of tartar, and salt at low speed until foamy. With mixer on high speed, add sugar in a slow, steady stream. Beat until stiff peaks form.
3. Place meringue in a large piping bag fitted with a ½-inch round tip. Holding tip perpendicular to parchment paper, pipe half of meringue as mushroom tops, ¾ to 1¼ inches across. (Use a wet finger to press down any points.) With remaining meringue, pipe stems as large kisses with ½-inch wide base. (It is OK if the kisses don't have smooth tips.)
4. Bake until meringues look dry and have started to brown slightly, 30 to 40 minutes. Let cool completely.
5. Using a wooden pick, poke a small hole in bottom of each mushroom top. Dip or brush melted chocolate on bottom of each mushroom top, and insert pointed stem end. Let stand until chocolate is set, about 5 minutes. Lightly dust with cocoa before serving. Best served the same day

GINGERBREAD BÛCHE DE NOËL

Makes 1 bûche de Noel

Our gingerbread Yule log—or stump, if you will—is a well-spiced, vertical take on the original, with a toasty Brown Sugar Buttercream coating the interior and exterior. Our final touch? Panels of edible birch bark, a delicious and realistic final touch to our epic cake.

- **3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter**
- **¼ cup (85 grams) molasses**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) grated fresh ginger**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **5 large eggs (250 grams)**
- **½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **1 large egg yolk (19 grams)**
- **¾ cup (94 grams) cake flour**
- **3 tablespoons (24 grams) cornstarch**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground ginger**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **¼ teaspoon ground cloves**
- **Molasses Simple Syrup (recipe follows)**
- **Brown Sugar Buttercream (recipe follows)**
- **White Chocolate Bark (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray an 18x13-inch rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray; line pan with parchment paper, and spray pan again.
2. In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Remove from heat, and stir in molasses, grated ginger, and vanilla. Set aside.
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together eggs, brown sugar, and egg yolk by hand. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer registers 110°F (43°C), about 5 minutes. Return bowl to stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, and beat at high speed until thick and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes.
4. In a medium bowl, place about 1 cup egg mixture. Fold in warm butter mixture. Set aside.
5. In a small bowl, sift together flour, cornstarch, ground ginger, cinnamon, salt, nutmeg, and cloves. Using a large balloon whisk, gently fold flour mixture into remaining egg mixture in two additions just until combined. Fold in butter mixture. Using an offset spatula, quickly and gently spread batter evenly in prepared pan.
6. Bake until cake starts to pull away from sides of pan, 12 to 15 minutes. Let cool completely in pan.
7. Loosen cake from sides of pan, if needed. Using a serrated knife, cut into 4 (12x4-inch) rectangles. (You will have some cake edges left over.) (Be sure to cut through the parchment paper as well; use scissors if needed). Lift each piece, with parchment attached, out of pan. Brush with Molasses Simple Syrup. Spread ⅔ cup Brown Sugar Buttercream on each rectangle.
8. Roll up 1 rectangle, jelly roll style, and place in center of a cake plate. Remove parchment. Carefully wrap a second rectangle around center roll, using parchment to help. Remove parchment, and repeat with remaining rectangles, creating a spiral. Using a serrated knife, trim end of final piece at an angle to make it flush with outer edge of cake.
9. Spread remaining Brown Sugar Buttercream on outside of cake. Without adding additional buttercream, lightly spread buttercream that peeks through the layers on top. Place White Chocolate Bark vertically on sides of cake, overlapping slightly and pressing into buttercream to hold in place. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or overnight. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour before serving.

Molasses Simple Syrup

Makes about ½ cup

- **⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar**
- **⅓ cup (80 grams) water**
- **1 tablespoon (21 grams) molasses**

1. In a small saucepan, bring sugar and ⅓ cup (80 grams) water to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat, and stir in molasses. Let cool completely. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

Brown Sugar Buttercream

Makes about 4 cups

- **4 large egg whites (120 grams), room temperature**
- **1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1¾ cups (397 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together egg whites and sugars by hand. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer registers 155°F (68°C) to 160°F (71°C).
2. Carefully return bowl to stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, and beat at high speed until bowl is cool to the touch, about 8 minutes. Add butter, 2 tablespoons (28 grams) at a time, beating until combined after each addition. Beat in vanilla and salt. Use immediately, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 3 days. If refrigerating, let stand at room temperature for 2 hours and rewhip until smooth before using.

White Chocolate Bark

Makes 2 (14x5-inch) rectangles of chocolate bark

- **¼ cup (40 grams) dark chocolate melting wafers, melted according to package directions and cooled slightly**
- **2 cups (320 grams) white chocolate melting wafers, melted according to package directions and cooled slightly**

1. Using a permanent marker, draw a 14x5-inch rectangle on each of 2 sheets of parchment paper. Turn parchment over and place on 2 rimmed baking sheets.
2. Using a fine-point, food-safe brush, brush melted dark chocolate inside each rectangle. Refrigerate until set, about 5 minutes.
3. Pour half of melted white chocolate on a rectangle. Using an offset spatula, spread white chocolate evenly, using the rectangle as a guide. Repeat procedure with remaining white chocolate. Refrigerate until set, 10 to 15 minutes
4. Break into small rectangles, about 5x1½ inches. (They do not have to be perfect.)

MAKE THE CAKE

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 5

STEP 6

STEP 3

STEP 4

How to Be a Genoise Genius

THE GRANDE DAME OF SPONGE CAKES, GENOISE IS NATURALLY LEAVENED BY AERATED EGGS TO CREATE A CAKE THAT IS BOTH LIGHT AS AIR AND FLEXIBLE ENOUGH FOR ROLLING. FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR ONE FLAWLESS SPONGE.

Step 1: In the bowl of a stand mixer, whisk together eggs, granulated sugar, and egg yolks by hand. Place bowl over a saucepan of simmering water. Cook, whisking occasionally, until an instant-read thermometer registers 110°F (43°C), about 5 minutes. We used the bain-marie method, a gentle heating of eggs and sugar over simmering water, to help the eggs whip up in dramatic fashion.

Step 2: Return bowl to stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, and beat at high speed until thick and tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. The batter will appear pale yellow and fall back in a luxurious, thick ribbon. This air whipped into the eggs will leaven the cake.

Step 3: In a medium bowl, place about 2 cups egg mixture. Fold in warm chocolate mixture. Now that the egg mixture has been aerated, be careful not to overmix or you'll knock precious bubbles out of the batter and create a flat cake

Step 4: In a small bowl, sift together flour and salt. Using a large balloon whisk, gently fold flour mixture into remaining egg mixture in two additions just until combined. A whisk helps thoroughly incorporate the flour without disturbing the aeration.

Step 5: Fold in chocolate mixture. Fold in warm melted butter in two additions. Unlike many American sponges, the genoise has a touch of fat, in this case butter, added to the batter to enhance flavor and tenderness. The butter must be melted; solidified butter will weigh down the aerated egg

Step 6: Using an offset spatula, quickly and gently spread batter evenly in prepared pan. Stiff with aeration, sponge cakes do not spread or even out of their own accord in the oven like butter cakes do, so smoothing the genoise with an offset spatula is key for a level cake.

ASSEMBLE THE CAKE

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

For the Classic Bûche de Noël

Step 1: Loosen cake from sides of pan, if needed. Invert onto a tea towel dusted with cocoa. Gently peel off parchment paper. Starting with one long side, roll up cake and towel together. Let cool completely on a wire rack.

Step 2: Carefully unroll cake, and brush with Cold Brew Simple Syrup. Spread with Vanilla Bean Buttercream. Reroll cake without towel, and place, seam side down, on a baking sheet, using towel as a sling. Cover with towel, and refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.

Step 3: Trim ends of cake flat. Trim 3 to 4 inches diagonally from one end. Trim a ¾-inch slice from same end. Place large cut section at an angle off side of cake, and attach with Chocolate Buttercream. Place small cut piece, angle cut side up, on top, and attach with buttercream.

Step 4: Spread remaining Chocolate Buttercream on outside of cake. Use an offset spatula to create detailed bark ridges. Decorate with Meringue Mushrooms; garnish with ground pistachios and confectioners' sugar, if desired.

STEP 1

STEP 2

STEP 3

STEP 4

For the Gingerbread Bûche de Noël

Step 1: Loosen cake from sides of pan, if needed. Using a serrated knife, cut into 4 (12x4-inch) rectangles. (You will have some cake edges leftover.) (Be sure to cut through the parchment paper as well—these will help you transfer your cake without tearing it; use scissors if needed.)

Step 2: Lift each rectangle , with parchment attached, out of pan. Brush with Molasses Simple Syrup. Spread ⅔ cup Brown Sugar Buttercream onto each rectangle. (If you have refrigerated your buttercream, make sure it is room temperature and soft enough to spread without tearing sponge cake.)

Step 3: Roll up 1 rectangle, jelly roll style, and place in center of a cake plate. Remove parchment. Using parchment to help, carefully pick up a second rectangle, and wrap around center roll. Remove parchment, and repeat with remaining rectangles, creating a spiral. Using a serrated knife, trim end of final piece at an angle to make it flush with outer edge of cake

Step 4: Spread remaining Brown Sugar Buttercream on outside of cake. Without adding additional buttercream, lightly spread buttercream that peeks through the layers on top. Place White Chocolate Bark vertically on outside of cake, overlapping slightly and pressing into buttercream to hold in place.

Timeline for Bûche de Noël

THIS DETAILED TIMELINE WILL HELP YOU TACKLE THIS CAKE WITH ORGANIZED GUSTO

3 DAYS AHEAD: Make buttercream and simple syrup. Cover and refrigerate.
2 DAYS AHEAD: Make White Chocolate Birch Bark, if using
1 DAY AHEAD: Bake cake. Frost and assemble. Decorate with White Chocolate Birch Bark, if using. Cover and refrigerate.
DAY OF: Bake and assemble Meringue Mushrooms, if using. Decorate with Meringue Mushrooms, pistachio moss, and confectioners' sugar, if using. Let stand at room temperature for 1 hour before serving.

DECORATION DEEP DIVE

Bring on the Bark

LEARN HOW A FEW BRUSHES OF DARK AND WHITE CHOCOLATE RECREATE THE BEAUTY OF BIRCH BARK

Using a permanent marker, draw a 14x5-inch rectangle on each of 2 sheets of parchment paper. Turn parchment over, and place on rimmed baking sheets. Using a fine-point, food-safe brush, brush melted dark chocolate inside each rectangle, forming the dark knots and slashes you might see on a real birch tree. Refrigerate until set, about 5 minutes.

Pour half of melted white chocolate onto a rectangle. Using an offset spatula, spread white chocolate evenly, using the rectangle as a guide. Repeat procedure with remaining white chocolate. Refrigerate until set, 10 to 15 minutes.

Break into small rectangles, about 5x1½ inches. These shards do not have to be perfect. They should resemble the rough ridges of tree bark. This is a rustic log, so keep it natural.

Very Merry Meringues

YOU'VE BAKED YOUR MERINGUES—NOW TRANSFORM THEM INTO SWEET FUNGI

Using a wooden pick, poke a small hole in bottom of each mushroom top. Dip or brush melted chocolate on bottom of each mushroom top, and insert pointed stem end. Let stand until chocolate has set, about 5 minutes. Lightly dust with cocoa before serving.

GREAT AMERICAN

Layer Cakes

DON'T BE FOOLED BY TITLES LIKE "ITALIAN CREAM" OR "GERMAN CHOCOLATE." THESE HOLIDAY CENTERPIECE CAKES ARE CERTIFIED AMERICAN SPECIALTIES, WITH FINE-CRUMBED LAYERS CLOAKED IN LAVISH FROSTINGS AND PACKED WITH DECADENT FILLINGS.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEPHANIE WELBOURNE STEELE / RECIPE DEVELOPMENT BY LAURA CRANDALL / STYLING BY SIDNEY BRAGIEL

Red Velvet Cake

Once upon a time, red velvet cake was a reddish-brown delicacy favored by the Victorians. Natural cocoa powder and tangy buttermilk gave red velvet its signature flavor as well as its russet hue, with the acidic cocoa and buttermilk reacting with basic baking soda to create a touch of red. So how did the barely red velvet cake transform into the gruesome red velvet armadillo groom's cake featured in *Steel Magnolias*? Cocoa, like everything else, has changed over the years. Natural cocoa powder has been superseded by Dutch cocoa powder, which makes a run-of-the-mill brown-hued cake. By the 1960s, the mild red produced by cocoa powder was traded in for the brilliant results of red food coloring. Today, anything from beets to wine can be used to color a velvet cake—just as long as it's red.

German Chocolate Cake

Despite its misleading name, the American home baker should thank the Lone Star State for this coconut, caramel, pecan, and chocolate extravaganza. The original recipe called for a heaping dose of German's Sweet Chocolate, a baking bar invented by Samuel German for Baker's Chocolate Company in 1852. Flash forward to 1957, when the *Dallas Morning News* featured "German's Chocolate Cake" as its delectable recipe of the day. Chocolate cake recipes were (and are) a dime a dozen, but this one had an instantly iconic component: a cooked coconut-pecan filling.

Italian Cream Cake

Certainly, there is such a thing as a real "Italian" cream cake, a ricotta- and fruit-filled dessert you can find in true Italian bakeries. But the American Italian cream cake is another 20th-century Southern invention: dense, covered in cream cheese frosting, and packed with some Southern favorites (coconut and pecans). Rumors and good recipes spread like wildfire in the South, so we don't know who invented it or when exactly it came to be. The most debated factor of an Italian cream cake is its coconut-to-pecan ratio. Whatever the baker's preference, there must be both, preferably packed in the cake layers and on the frosting. Because that's the true American-Southern-Italian way.

Burnt Sugar Cake

Also known as burnt Leather Cake, burnt sugar cake has been a golden classic since the early 1900s and was particularly beloved by the original American gourmand, James Beard, whose mother made a famed family version. In fact, he included a recipe for it in his seminal 1972 *James Beard's American Cookery*. White sugar is cooked in a dry skillet until it liquefies and "burns" or caramelizes and then boiling water is poured in to create a sputtering amber syrup. Added directly to the cake layers, the burnt syrup has a purer flavor than the cream- and butter-filled caramels of today and puts the focus on the golden sugar flavor.

Spiced Fruit Cake

This cake is an amalgamation of many great American classics. Inspired by the fruit-filled lane cake and Lady Baltimore cake but with the flavor profile of a boozy English fruitcake crossed with a spice cake, this hybrid beauty celebrates all that an American holiday cake can be. Fruitcake came to the United States via Europe, and over the years, we've tinkered with the recipe, adding jewel-toned red and green candied maraschino cherries and packed with America's favorite nut: pecans. We also have a penchant for stuffing our cakes with spirit-soaked fruit, like in the aforementioned lane cake and Lady Baltimore cake. Then there's the Japanese fruitcake, a Southern favorite that has nothing to do with Japan whatsoever. Two delicate white cake layers sandwich a spiced ambrosia-like fruit filling all while coated in dreamy seven-minute frosting. With each of these classic cakes in mind, we invented this two-layer stunner to embrace the best of all worlds.

ITALIAN CREAM CAKE

Makes 1 (8-inch) cake

We kept our cake batter—studded with chopped pecans and sweet coconut flakes—light by folding in whipped cream. Then we brought this fluffy cake back down to earth with a heavy coat of Cream Cheese Frosting, appropriately adorned with more pecans and toasted coconut.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1½ cups (300 grams) granulated sugar
½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
4 large eggs (200 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
2½ cups (313 grams) all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
1 cup (240 grams) whole buttermilk
½ cup (120 grams) heavy whipping cream, room temperature
1¼ cups (126 grams) packed sweetened flaked coconut
¾ cup (85 grams) chopped pecan pieces
Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe follows)
Garnish: toasted coconut, chopped pecans

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter and flour 2 (8-inch) round cake pans.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition.
4. In another medium bowl, whisk cream by hand until soft peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold whipped cream into cake batter in two additions. Fold in coconut and pecans. Divide batter between prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.
5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Spread Cream Cheese Frosting between layers and on top and sides of cake. Garnish sides with coconut and pecans, if desired. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Cream Cheese Frosting

Makes about 6 cups

16 ounces (455 grams) cream cheese, softened
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
7½ cups (900 grams) confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat cream cheese and butter at medium-low speed until smooth and creamy, about 1 minute. Add vanilla and salt, beating until combined. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until combined. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, about 1 minute.

SPICED FRUITCAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

Lightly spiced with ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves, our Spiced Fruitcake is at once tender and aromatic. For our boozy Fruit Filling, brandy-soaked dried figs, cranberries, cherries, and apricots combine with crunchy slivered almonds for a triumph of texture and taste. To top it off, we enrobed our cake in the ultimate vanilla-scented frosting: American buttercream.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
4 large eggs (200 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
3 cups (375 grams) all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground cinnamon
1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground ginger
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
1 teaspoon (1 gram) ground nutmeg
¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
1 cup (240 grams) whole buttermilk
Brandy Simple Syrup (recipe follows)
Vanilla Buttercream (recipe follows)
Fruit Filling (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter and flour 2 (9-inch) round cake pans
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cinnamon, ginger, baking powder, baking soda, nutmeg, salt, and cloves. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Divide batter between prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, about 40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and place on wire racks. Brush warm cake layers with Brandy Simple Syrup. Let cool completely.
5. Place 2 cups Vanilla Buttercream in a piping bag, and cut a ½-inch opening. Pipe a thick border around edge of first cake layer. Using an offset spatula, spread chilled Fruit Filling inside piped border. Top with remaining layer, and spread remaining Vanilla Buttercream on top and sides of cake. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Brandy Simple Syrup

Makes about 1 cup

⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar
⅓ cup (80 grams) water
⅓ cup (80 grams) brandy

1. In a small saucepan, bring sugar and ⅓ cup (80 grams) water to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat, and stir in brandy. Let cool completely. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Vanilla Buttercream

Makes about 6 cups

2 cups (454 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 teaspoons (12 grams) vanilla bean paste
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
7½ cups (900 grams) confectioners' sugar
½ cup (120 grams) heavy whipping cream

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, vanilla bean paste, and salt at low speed until smooth. Add confectioners' sugar, about 1 cup (120 grams) at a time, alternately with cream, about 1 tablespoon (15 grams) at a time, beating just until combined after each addition. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until smooth and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes.

Fruit Filling

Makes about 2 cups

- ¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter
- ⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar
- 4 large egg yolks (76 grams)
- ¾ cup (85 grams) chopped slivered almonds
- ¼ cup (32 grams) dried cranberries
- ¼ cup (32 grams) dried cherries
- ¼ cup (32 grams) chopped dried figs
- ¼ cup (32 grams) chopped dried apricots
- 3 tablespoons (45 grams) brandy

1. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Stir in sugar until combined. Whisk in egg yolks until well combined; cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture is very thick, 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in almonds and all remaining ingredients. Cover with plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of filling. Refrigerate until completely cool.

GERMAN CHOCOLATE CAKE

Makes 1 (9-inch) cake

Our German Chocolate Cake has melted chocolate folded right into the batter and an extra dose of cocoa powder. We decided there's plenty of room for both a Creamy Chocolate Frosting and the Coconut-Pecan Filling. Piping a thick border of frosting on the top allows our coconut-pecan custard to pool without overflowing.

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 cup (220 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 4 large eggs (200 grams)
- 1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract
- 2½ cups (313 grams) all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup (21 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder
- ½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
- ½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
- 1½ cups (360 grams) whole buttermilk
- 6 ounces (175 grams) sweet baking chocolate, melted and cooled
- Creamy Chocolate Frosting (recipe follows)
- Coconut Pecan Filling (recipe follows)
- Garnish: flaked coconut, chopped pecans

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter and flour 2 (9-inch) round cake pans.

2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla

3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Stir in melted chocolate until combined. Divide batter between prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.

4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.

5. Place 2 cups Creamy Chocolate Frosting in a piping bag fitted with a medium open star tip (Wilton No. 4B). Pipe a thick border around top edge of first cake layer. Using an offset spatula, spread half of chilled Coconut Pecan Filling inside piped border. Top with remaining cake layer. Pipe Creamy Chocolate Frosting in a swirl pattern around top edge of cake layer, and spread remaining Coconut Pecan Filling inside border. Spread remaining Creamy Chocolate Frosting on sides of cake. Garnish with coconut and pecans, if desired.

Creamy Chocolate Frosting

Makes about 4 cups

- 1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ cup (21 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
- ⅔ cup (160 grams) sour cream
- 5 cups (600 grams) confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Add cocoa, and beat at low speed until combined. Beat in sour cream until smooth. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until smooth and creamy.

Coconut Pecan Filling

Makes about 4 cups

- 1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
- 1 cup (247 grams) evaporated milk
- ½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
- 3 large egg yolks (57 grams)
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1½ cups (180 grams) packed sweetened flaked coconut
- 1 cup (113 grams) chopped pecans*
- 2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract

1. In a medium saucepan, whisk together sugar, evaporated milk, butter, egg yolks, and salt until smooth. Cook over medium heat, whisking frequently, until mixture has thickened and coats the back of a spoon, 10 to 12 minutes.

2. Remove from heat, and stir in coconut, pecans, and vanilla. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours or up to 3 days.

**We used Sunnyland Farms Raw Georgia Pecan Halves*

BURNT SUGAR CAKE

Makes 1 (8 inch) cake

Our cake is nothing without the essential Burnt Sugar Syrup, a simple caramel syrup that will remind you sugar can offer complex flavor all on its own. With a further nod toward tradition, we covered the tender cake layers in silky waves of Penuche Icing. (See opposite page for the lowdown on this classic frosting.)

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
4 large eggs (200 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
3½ cups (437 grams) cake flour
1 tablespoon (15 grams) baking powder
1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt
1 cup (240 grams) whole milk
Burnt Sugar Syrup (recipe follows)
Penuche Icing (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter and flour 2 (8-inch) round cake pans.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugars at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. In a small bowl, combine milk and Burnt Sugar Syrup. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Divide batter between prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Spread Penuche Icing between layers and on top and sides of cake. Store in an airtight container.

Burnt Sugar Syrup

Makes about ½ cup

½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar
½ cup (120 grams) boiling water

1. In a small heavy-bottomed saucepan, spread sugar; cook over medium-low heat, without stirring, until sugar begins to melt. Using a silicone spatula, gently drag melted sugar to center of pan so sugar melts evenly. Cook, without stirring, until melted sugar turns a light amber color. Remove from heat, and slowly add ½ cup (120 grams) boiling water. (Be careful—it will steam, and it can splatter.) Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly, until smooth and mixture looks like maple syrup, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and let cool for 15 minutes

Penuche Icing

Makes 4½ cups

1½ cups (340 grams) unsalted butter, softened and divided
1½ cups (330 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
½ cup (120 grams) heavy whipping cream
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
4½ cups (540 grams) confectioners' sugar, sifted

1. In a small saucepan, melt ¾ cup (170 grams) butter over medium heat. Pour into the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Let cool slightly
2. In same saucepan, whisk together brown sugar, cream, and salt over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sugar is melted and mixture starts to boil. Add to melted butter. Add half of confectioners' sugar, and beat until smooth. Add remaining confectioners' sugar, beating until combined. With the mixer on medium speed, slowly add remaining ½ cup (170 grams) butter, 1 tablespoon (14 grams) at a time, until smooth and combined. Cover,and let stand until icing has reached a spreadable consistency, 10 to 30 minutes.

RED VELVET CAKE

Makes 1 (8 inch) cake

Rich, tender, and deeply red, our Red Velvet Cake comes equipped with the luxurious crumb and tangy taste you've grown accustomed to. We opted for the more traditional Ermine Icing, a frosting with a cooked roux base and an infinitely smooth finish.

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 cups (400 grams) granulated sugar
4 large eggs (200 grams), room temperature
2½ cups (313 grams) all-purpose flour
½ cup (43 grams) unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking soda
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
1 cup (240 grams) whole buttermilk
1 (1-ounce) bottle (30 grams) liquid red food coloring
1 tablespoon (15 grams) distilled white vinegar
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
Ermine Icing (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter and flour 3 (8-inch) round cake pans.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cocoa, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Stir in food coloring, vinegar, and vanilla. Divide batter among prepared pans, smoothing tops with an offset spatula
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 28 to 30 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks. Trim each layer flat; reserve trimmings for garnish. Spread Ermine Icing between layers and on top of cake. Spread a thin layer of Ermine Icing on sides of cake; using a bench scraper, smooth icing, leaving sides of cake exposed. Crumble reserved cake trimmings on top of cake. Store in an airtight container.

Ermine Icing

Makes about 3 cups

5 tablespoons (40 grams) all-purpose flour
1 cup (240 grams) cold whole milk
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar

1. In a small saucepan, cook flour and milk over medium heat, whisking constantly, until thickened and pudding-like and an instant-read thermometer registers 170°F (77°C), 4 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat, and whisk in vanilla and salt. Pour into a small bowl; cover with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until completely cool, about 1 hour.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with paddle attachment, beat butter until creamy and smooth, about 2 minutes. With mixer on medium speed, slowly add sugar, and beat until smooth and fluffy, 6 to 7 minutes. Slowly add cooled flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat until light and fluffy. (It should look like whipped cream.) Use immediately.

Icing Intel

THESE CAKES AREN'T THE ONLY SWEET ICONS FEATURED—THEIR ICINGS ARE NATIONAL TREASURES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT. HERE, WE SPOTLIGHT TWO LESSER-KNOWN BUT STILL ESSENTIAL AMERICAN ICINGS.

Ermine Icing: Before confectioners' sugar was invented, home bakers had to create creamy frostings through high heat, like the boiled, ethereal seven-minute frosting. From this tradition came ermine frosting, a cloud-like spread that begins on the stovetop with a roux. Milk and flour thicken into a pudding-like mixture, which then chills in the fridge before being whipped with butter and granulated sugar. The end result? A fluffy frosting that looks like whipped cream and feels like luxurious silk. Long before cream cheese frosting came into the picture, this was the frosting of choice for red velvet cake.

Penuche Icing: Penuche is a buttery, praline-like candy brought over by the Portuguese to New England in the 18th century. Boiled brown sugar and milk create a caramel-flavored fudge and, with the case of our Penuche Icing, a golden feather-like icing. In Hawaii, where the Portuguese also brought their penuche, the frosting (called panocha frosting) was often used to cover banana or prune cakes. Unsurprisingly, it's also a perfect pairing for our Burnt Sugar Cake.

(PEPPER)MINT TO BE

WITH FOUR RECIPES BURSTING WITH COOL PEPPERMINT FLAVOR AND FEATURING CRUSHED CANDIES AND EVEN PEPPERMINT EXTRACT, WE SHOW YOU WHY THE SEASON'S MOST ICONIC CANDY IS MUCH MORE THAN A STOCKING STUFFER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM DICKEY / RECIPE DEVELOPMENT BY TRICIA MANZANERO / FOOD STYLING BY VANESSA ROCCHIO
STYLING BY COURTNI BODIFORD

Peppermint Swirl Pound Cake
page 77

Triple-Chocolate Peppermint Tart
page 79

Simple Salted Peppermint Bark
page 80

Peppermint Cream Puffs
page 77

White Chocolate-Peppermint Sweet Rolls
page 79

PEPPERMINT SWIRL POUND CAKE

Makes 1 (8½x4½-inch) cake

Classic pound cake goes from simple to showstopping thanks to a double dose of peppermint candies and peppermint extract swirled into marbled vanilla and cocoa batters. Topped with a Cream Cheese Glaze, this cake strikes the perfect balance between sweet and tangy.

- **¾ cup (170 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **4 ounces (113 grams) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature**
- **1½ cups (187 grams) unbleached cake flour**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking powder**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) whole milk, room temperature**
- **3 tablespoons (25 grams) finely crushed round peppermint candies**
- **¼ cup (21 grams) Dutch process cocoa powder, sifted**
- **½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract**
- **Cream Cheese Glaze (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: roughly crushed round peppermint candies**

1. Preheat oven to 300°F (150°C). Line an 8½x4½-inch loaf pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.

2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and cream cheese at medium speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Add sugars and vanilla; beat until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. (Mixture may look curdled at this point, but batter will come together.)

3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, salt, and baking powder. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture in two additions alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined. Spoon 2 cups (about 406 grams) batter into a medium bowl; fold in crushed peppermint candies. Add cocoa and peppermint extract to remaining batter in mixer bowl; stir until combined.

4. Using a 1-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, alternately drop batters into prepared pan; gently swirl batters together using the tip of a knife. Tap pan on counter twice to release any air bubbles.

5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 hour and 15 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Run a knife around edges of pan. Using excess parchment as handles, remove cake from pan; let cool completely on a wire rack. Place Cream Cheese Glaze in a small piping bag, and cut a ¼-inch opening in tip; drizzle glaze onto cooled cake. Garnish with peppermint candies, if desired. Store unglazed cake, wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, for up to 3 days.

Cream Cheese Glaze

Makes ⅓ cup

- **¼ cup (30 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **2 ounces (55 grams) cream cheese, softened**
- **⅛ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) whole milk**

1. In a small bowl, stir together confectioners' sugar, cream cheese, and salt until well combined. Stir in milk until smooth. Use immediately.

PEPPERMINT CREAM PUFFS

Makes about 24 cream puffs

Filled with velvety Peppermint Pastry Cream, these airy pâte à choux puffs combine French elegance with holiday flair. We used crushed peppermint candies to lend refreshing sweetness to the pastry cream, and a dusting of peppermint sugar over the pastries makes for a simple, festive finish.

- **½ cup plus 1 tablespoon (127 grams) unsalted butter***
- **½ cup (120 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water, divided**
- **½ cup (120 grams) whole milk**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **6 large eggs (300 grams), room temperature and divided**
- **1 large egg white (30 grams), room temperature**
- **Peppermint Pastry Cream (recipe follows)**

2 tablespoons (16 grams) finely crushed soft peppermint candies
2 tablespoons (14 grams) confectioners' sugar
Garnish: crushed soft peppermint candies

1. Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C). Using a permanent marker and a 2-inch round cutter as a guide, draw 24 circles evenly spaced onto 2 sheets of parchment paper. Turn parchment over, and place on 2 baking sheets.
2. In a medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add ½ cup (120 grams) water, milk, granulated sugar, and salt; bring to a boil. Using a wooden spoon, stir in flour. Cook, stirring constantly, until a skin forms on bottom of pan, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer mixture to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. With mixer on low speed, beat until dough is warm to the touch, about 1 minute. Add 5 eggs (250 grams) and egg white, one at a time, beating until combined after each addition
3. Transfer batter to an 18-inch piping bag fitted with a ½-inch round tip (Wilton 1A). Place piping tip in center of a drawn circle. Hold tip perpendicular ½ inch above parchment paper. Holding tip stationary the entire time, apply even pressure until batter reaches edges of drawn circle. Stop applying pressure, and lift up. Wet your finger with water, and press down tip to create a smooth top. Repeat with remaining batter. In a small bowl, whisk together remaining 1 egg (50 grams) and remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water. Brush tops of batter rounds with egg wash.
4. Bake for 15 minutes. Rotate pans, and bake until fully puffed and deep golden brown, about 10 minutes more. Let cool completely on wire racks.
5. Using a ¼-inch round piping tip, poke a hole in center of bottom of each puff. Insert a skewer into hole, and move it around to ensure cream will fill entire puff. Place Peppermint Pastry Cream in a pipping bag fitted with same ¼-inch tip. Place piping tip into hole, and apply gentle pressure to fill. Repeat with remaining puffs and remaining Peppermint Pastry Cream.
6. When ready to plate, stir together crushed peppermint candies and confectioners' sugar in a small bowl. Using a fine-mesh sieve, dust peppermint sugar mixture onto cream puffs. Garnish with peppermint candy pieces, if desired. Serve immediately, or refrigerate until ready to serve. Best served same day.

**We used Président*

Peppermint Pastry Cream

Makes about 3½ cups

3 cups (720 grams) whole milk
⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar, divided
6 tablespoons (48 grams) cornstarch
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
4 large egg yolks (74 grams)
2 tablespoons (28 grams) unsalted butter, softened
¾ teaspoon (3 grams) peppermint extract
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract
¼ cup (32 grams) finely crushed soft peppermint candies

1. In a medium saucepan, combine milk and ⅓ cup (66.5 grams) sugar. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, just until bubbles form around edge of pan.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together cornstarch, salt, and remaining ⅓ cup (66.5 grams) sugar. Whisk in yolks until well combined. (Mixture will be very thick.) Gradually add milk mixture to yolk mixture, whisking constantly. Return mixture to saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat, whisking constantly. Cook, whisking constantly, until thickened and an instant-read thermometer registers 190°F (88°C), 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Remove from heat. Stir in butter and extracts until butter is melted. Strain through fine-mesh sieve into a glass bowl. Cover with a piece of plastic wrap, pressing wrap directly onto surface of pastry cream to prevent a skin from forming. Refrigerate until thoroughly chilled, 2 to 3 hours or overnight.
4. When ready to use, whisk pastry cream until smooth; stir in crushed peppermint candies. Use immediately.

Notes: *To finely crush soft peppermint candies, place in a medium resealable plastic bag. Using a rolling pin, crush candies; continue to roll over candies in bag with rolling pin until finely crushed (peppermint pieces no larger than ⅛ inch thick). Peppermint Pastry Cream can be made through step 3 up to 4 days in advance and kept refrigerated. Stir in finely crushed peppermint candies just before ready to use.*

WHITE CHOCOLATE-PEPPERMINT SWEET ROLLS

Makes 12 rolls

If you're on the hunt for the ultimate holiday breakfast, look no further than these pillowy sweet rolls. The white chocolate chunk, crushed peppermint, and slivered almond filling will satisfy your holiday sweet tooth while the luscious Cream Cheese Icing will keep you coming back for more.

4¼ to 4½ cups (531 to 563 grams) all-purpose flour, divided
⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar
1 (0.25-ounce) package (7 grams) active dry yeast*
2 teaspoons (6 grams) kosher salt
1¼ cups (300 grams) whole milk
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened and divided
1 large egg (50 grams)
¼ teaspoon (1 gram) peppermint extract
½ cup (86 grams) roughly crushed round peppermint candies
2 ounces (57 grams) white chocolate baking bars, roughly chopped
⅓ cup (44 grams) finely chopped slivered almonds
Cream Cheese Icing (recipe follows)
Garnish: crushed peppermint candies

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat 1½ cups (188 grams) flour, sugar, yeast, and salt on medium-low speed until well combined.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat milk and ½ cup (113.5 grams) butter over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 120°F (49°C) to 130°F (54°C). Add milk mixture to flour mixture; beat at medium speed for 2 minutes. Add egg; beat at medium-high speed for 2 minutes. With mixer on low speed, gradually add 2¾ cups (344 grams) flour, beating just until combined and stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
3. Switch to the dough hook attachment. Beat at medium speed until a soft dough forms, 6 to 8 minutes, scraping down dough hook and sides of bowl as needed; add remaining ¼ cup (31 grams) flour, 1 tablespoon (8 grams) at a time, if necessary. (Dough should pass the windowpane test [see Note], but may still stick slightly to sides of bowl.)
4. Spray a large bowl with cooking spray. Place dough in bowl, turning to grease top. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 40 minutes to 1 hour. (See PRO TIP for make-ahead method.)
5. Line a 13x9-inch rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
6. In a small bowl, stir together peppermint extract and remaining ½ cup (113.5 grams) butter.
7. Lightly punch down dough. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 18x12-inch rectangle. Using a small offset spatula, spread peppermint butter mixture onto dough, leaving a ½-inch border on one long side. Sprinkle with peppermint candies, white chocolate, and almonds. Starting with long side opposite border, roll up dough, jelly roll style; pinch seam to seal. Gently shape log to 18 inches long and even thickness, if necessary. Using a serrated knife dipped in flour, cut log into 12 slices (about 1½ inches thick), trimming edges slightly, if needed. Place slices, cut side down, in prepared pan. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size, 30 to 45 minutes.
8. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
9. Bake until lightly golden and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 190°F (88°C), 20 to 25 minutes, loosely covering with foil to prevent excess browning, if necessary. Let cool in pan for 30 minutes. Spread Cream Cheese Icing onto rolls; garnish with peppermint candies, if desired. Serve warm.

**We used Red Star® Active Dry Yeast.*

Note: *Test the dough for proper gluten development using the windowpane test. Pinch off (don't tear) a small piece of dough. Slowly pull the dough out from the center. If the dough is ready, you will be able to stretch it until it's thin and translucent like a windowpane. If the dough tears, it's not quite ready. Beat for 1 minute more, and test again.*

PRO TIP
To prep ahead, follow recipe through step 3. Punch down dough; place in a large resealable plastic bag, and refrigerate. When ready to shape, prepare filling ingredients. Shape dough as directed; let rise in a warm, draft-free place (75°F/24°C) until doubled in size. Bake as directed.

Cream Cheese Icing

Makes 2 cups

½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened
4 ounces (113 grams) cream cheese, softened
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, cream cheese, and salt at medium speed until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar until combined; increase speed to medium, and beat until smooth and fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Use immediately.

TRIPLE-CHOCOLATE PEPPERMINT TART

Makes 1 (13¾x4½ inch) tart

For last year's Williams Sonoma Peppermint Bark Off, Erin Clarkson of the blog Cloudy Kitchen *made the most epic Peppermint Bark and Milk Chocolate Tart with Swiss Meringue Buttercream. We decided to give her recipe a triple-chocolate spin. You'll come for the chocolate graham cracker crust and the ganache filling, but you'll stay for our Simple Salted Peppermint Bark. Studded with sea salt and packed with crushed peppermint candies, the bark rounds out every bite of this indulgent dessert with wintry freshness.*

1½ cups (170 grams) chocolate graham cracker crumbs (about 11 sheets)
2 tablespoons (24 grams) granulated sugar
6 tablespoons (84 grams) unsalted butter, melted
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract

10 ounces (284 grams) 64% cacao semisweet chocolate, chopped
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
1¼ cups (300 grams) heavy whipping cream
¾ teaspoon (3 grams) peppermint extract
White Chocolate Frosting (recipe follows)
Garnish: Simple Salted Peppermint Bark (recipe follows), crushed peppermint candies

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 13¾x4½-inch removable-bottom tart pan with cooking spray.
2. In the work bowl of a food processor, combine graham cracker crumbs and sugar. Pulse until well combined, about 4 pulses. Add melted butter and vanilla; pulse until combined and mixture holds together when pinched. Press mixture into bottom and up sides of prepared pan.
3. Bake until crust is set and fragrant, about 10 minutes. Let cool completely on a wire rack.
4. In a large heatproof bowl, place chocolate and salt.
5. In a medium saucepan, bring cream to a simmer over medium heat. Pour cream over chocolate; let stand for 5 minutes. Stir until chocolate is melted and mixture is smooth. Stir in peppermint extract. Slowly pour chocolate mixture into prepared crust, carefully smoothing into an even layer with a small offset spatula. (Tart shell will be quite full.) Refrigerate until filling is set, at least 4 hours.
6. Place White Chocolate Frosting in a large pastry bag fitted with a coupler; pipe onto tart using a variety of piping tips*. Garnish with Simple Salted Peppermint Bark and peppermint candies, if desired.

**We used Wilton No. 21 and No. 32 piping tips.*

White Chocolate Frosting

Makes about 1 cup

3 ounces (85 grams) cream cheese, softened
1 teaspoon (5 grams) unsalted butter, softened
2 ounces (55 grams) white chocolate, melted and cooled for 5 minutes
1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
¼ teaspoon (1 gram) vanilla extract
⅛ teaspoon kosher salt

1. In a medium bowl, beat cream cheese and butter with a mixer at medium speed until smooth, 1 to 2 minutes. Beat in melted white chocolate. Add confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and salt; beat until well combined, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Use immediately.

Simple Salted Peppermint Bark

Makes about 1 pound

6 ounces (170 grams) dark chocolate melting wafers
¾ teaspoon (3 grams) peppermint extract, divided
¼ teaspoon (1 gram) vanilla extract
8 ounces (227 grams) white chocolate melting wafers
8 round peppermint candies, roughly crushed (36 grams)
¼ teaspoon (1 gram) flaked sea salt

1. Line a 9-inch square baking pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a small microwave-safe bowl, place dark chocolate; heat on high in 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth, about 1 minute to 1 minute and 30 seconds. Stir in ½ teaspoon (2 grams) peppermint extract and vanilla.
3. Spread melted dark chocolate in an even layer on bottom of prepared pan. Firmly tap on counter several times to remove any air bubbles; let stand for 10 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, in another small microwave-safe bowl, place white chocolate; heat on high in 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth, about 1 minute to 1 minute and 30 seconds. Stir in remaining ¼ teaspoon (1 gram) peppermint extract.
5. Spread melted white chocolate onto dark chocolate. Sprinkle with crushed peppermints and sea salt. Let stand until hardened, about 1 hour. Use immediately, or store in an airtight container.

A POP OF *Persimmon*

EVERY WINTER IN JAPAN, AS THE VIBRANT AUTUMN FOLIAGE FADES AFTER THE FIRST FROST, PERSIMMON TREES ARE JUST HITTING THEIR STRIDE. RIPE, TENDER PERSIMMONS HANG FROM EVERY BRANCH BY THE DOZEN, LIGHTING UP THE SNOWY LANDSCAPE IN BURSTS OF FIERY ORANGE. DERIVED FROM THE LATIN WORD *DIOSPYROS*, MEANING "DIVINE FRUIT," PERSIMMONS ARE NATIVE TO EAST ASIA AND ONE OF THE MOST VERSATILE YET UNDERUSED FRUITS OF FALL AND WINTER. HERE, WE USHER IN THE NEW SEASON BY BAKING WITH PERSIMMONS.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY **NICOLE DU BOIS** /
STYLING BY **MARY BETH JONES**

Cinnamon Persimmon Cake
page 88

Persimmon Ginger
Upside-Down Cake
page 87

PURELY PERSIMMON: *Hachiya vs. Fuyu*

Persimmons resemble tomatoes in size and shape but taste much sweeter. They can be enjoyed as a subtle addition to many baked goods, and some varieties are better suited to baking. We used two of the most common types in our recipes: Japanese varieties Hachiya and Fuyu. Both have a flavor that's predominantly sweet, with subtle hints of honey and plum. Because Hachiya and Fuyu have different textures when ripe, though, they aren't necessarily interchangeable in recipes. Below, we break down their differences and how to properly choose and store them.

HACHIYA

Known as "baking persimmons," Hachiya persimmons are oblong and heart- or acorn-shaped. These deep red-orange persimmons are an astringent variety, so they can only be enjoyed when completely ripe—otherwise, they will have an unpleasant bitter taste. Because they can be delicate, you will usually find them unripe at the store. Take them home and let them sit out until the texture when squeezed feels custard-like and juicy, similar to a full water balloon. When the fruit is very soft and easily bruised, it's ready to use. You can just scoop the vibrant orange pulp right out and add it to your cake batter, pie filling, or cookie dough. Try substituting Hachiya persimmon for pumpkin purée in your next recipe that calls for it.

FUYU

Fuyu persimmons are round and squat, with a firmer flesh than the Hachiya, which makes them great for slicing and chopping to stir into your batter. They're also great for using in savory recipes that need an extra contrasting sweet kick. Pale to bright yellow-orange, Fuyu is a nonastringent variety, so it can be eaten more freely than the Hachiya. The Fuyu is ripe when it feels crisp. While you can enjoy them when they're still crisp, they're best once they've softened slightly.

CHOOSING & STORING PERSIMMONS

Persimmon fruit matures late in the fall and can stay on the tree through most of winter. Once they're in season, you can find them at grocery stores and farmers' markets. Whatever the variety, look for plump persimmons with smooth, shiny skin in deep, saturated colors, free of cracks or blemishes. Already-ripe Hachiyas often have some black staining on the skin, but this isn't a problem. To avoid buying fruit that's too bruised, buy slightly underripe Hachiya and Fuyu and let them ripen at home. Only buy ripe persimmons if you plan to eat or use them within a day or two. Store them at room temperature. Refrigerating will result in chill damage.

Persimmon Scones
page 87

PERSIMMON-APPLE CRISP

Makes 1 (9-inch) deep-dish pie

Persimmons take the traditional apple crisp to a new level of tasty. The Fuyu persimmons' delicate, sweet flavor already has undertones of apple, along with honey, vanilla, and cinnamon, so it complements the tart apples here perfectly. The fruits bake into a tender medley of warm autumn flavor piled high with a walnut and oat topping, which lends the distinct crunch for which the dessert is named.

- **3 Fuyu persimmons (435 grams), chopped**
- **1 medium Honeycrisp apple (247 grams), chopped**
- **1 medium Granny Smith apple (247 grams), chopped**
- **¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon (39 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **1 tablespoon (18 grams) vanilla bean paste**
- **1 tablespoon (3 grams) lemon zest**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) fresh lemon juice**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **Walnut Crisp Topping (recipe follows)**
- **Crème Fraîche Caramel (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).
2. In a large bowl, toss together persimmons and apples. Add flour, sugars, vanilla bean paste, lemon zest and juice, cinnamon, salt, and nutmeg, tossing to combine. Let stand for 10 minutes.
3. Place persimmon mixture in a 9-inch baking dish. Top with Walnut Crisp Topping.
4. Bake until topping is golden brown and filling is bubbly, 35 to 40 minutes. Let stand for 15 minutes. Serve with Crème Fraîche Caramel Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

Walnut Crisp Topping

Makes about 3 cups

- **½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **½ cup (57 grams) chopped walnuts**
- **½ cup (40 grams) old-fashioned oats**
- **1½ tablespoons (4.5 grams) orange zest**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 teaspoon (6 grams) vanilla bean paste**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon**
- **¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon (71 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed**

1. In a small bowl, stir together flour, sugars, walnuts, oats, zest, salt, vanilla bean paste, and cinnamon. Using your fingertips, cut in cold butter until pea-size crumbs remain. Squeeze mixture into small and large clumps. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Crème Fraîche Caramel

Makes 1¼ cups

- **½ cup (120 grams) crème fraîche**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) heavy whipping cream**
- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar**
- **4 tablespoons (60 grams) water, divided**
- **3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract**

1. In a small microwave-safe bowl, combine crème fraîche and cream. Heat on high until an instant-read thermometer registers 100°F (38°C), about 20 seconds.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat sugar and 3 tablespoons (45 grams) water over high heat, being careful not to splash sides of pan. (It should be the consistency of wet sand.) Use remaining 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water to brush down sides of pan, and gently whisk to help sugar dissolve. (Do not stir once it starts to boil.) Cook until desired light amber color is reached. Remove from heat; slowly add warm crème fraîche mixture, whisking to combine. Add butter, a few pieces at a time, whisking until combined. Stir in vanilla. Let cool completely.

PERSIMMON GINGER UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE

Makes 1 (9¾-inch) cake

Sliced persimmons give this simple cake a graphic, gorgeous look. We doubled up on holiday spice, mixing both fresh ginger and crystallized ginger into the zesty batter for a deliciously zippy kick.

- **¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **3 Fuyu persimmons (435 grams), sliced ¼ inch thick and halved**
- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **1 cup plus 3 tablespoons (236 grams) granulated sugar**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**
- **1½ teaspoons (1.5 grams) lemon zest**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **½ teaspoon grated fresh ginger**
- **1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking soda**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- **⅔ cup (160 grams) whole buttermilk**
- **½ cup (88 grams) chopped crystallized ginger**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C).

2. Pour melted butter into a 9¾-inch tarte Tatin dish*. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush butter up sides of dish. Sprinkle with brown sugar. Arrange persimmon slices in a single layer over brown sugar to completely cover bottom of dish

3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat softened butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in lemon zest, vanilla, and fresh ginger.

4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, salt, baking soda, nutmeg, and cloves. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Fold in crystallized ginger. Pour batter over persimmon slices, smoothing with an offset spatula.

5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool in pan for 10 minutes. Run a knife around edges of dish to release sides of cake; carefully invert onto a flat serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**This recipe can also be made in an enamel-coated cast-iron skillet*

PERSIMMON SCONES

Makes about 7 scones

The floral sweetness and spicy undertones of persimmons really sing in these extra-tender cinnamon-scented scones, brimming with fresh pieces of the fruit. A maple syrup glaze brings an extra dose of warmth.

- **2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **5 tablespoons (70 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar, divided**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking soda**
- **¼ teaspoon ground ginger**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom**
- **¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon (71 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed**
- **¾ cup (134 grams) diced Fuyu persimmons**
- **¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (210 grams) plus 1 teaspoon (5 grams) cold heavy whipping cream, divided**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract***
- **1 large egg (50 grams)**
- **Maple Glaze (recipe follows)**

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

2. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, 3 tablespoons (42 grams) brown sugar, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, baking soda, ginger, and cardamom. Using a pastry blender, cut in cold butter until mixture is crumbly. Toss persimmons in flour mixture. Add ¾ cup plus 2 tablespoons (210 grams) cold cream and vanilla, stirring with a fork just until dry ingredients are moistened.

3. Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface, and knead gently 4 to 5 times. Roll dough to 1-inch thickness. Using a 2½-inch round cutter, cut dough, rerolling scraps as necessary. Place 2 inches apart on prepared pan. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes.

4. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).

5. In a small bowl, whisk together egg and remaining 1 teaspoon (5 grams) cold cream. Using a pastry brush, brush top of scones with egg wash. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons (28 grams) brown sugar.

6. Bake until golden brown, 16 to 18 minutes. Let cool on pan for 5 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Drizzle with Maple Glaze. Store in an airtight container for up to 3 days.

**We used Heilala Pure Vanilla Extract.*

Maple Glaze

Makes ⅔ cup

1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
2½ tablespoons (53 grams) maple syrup
¼ cup plus 1 tablespoon (75 grams) heavy whipping cream

1. In a small bowl, place confectioners' sugar. Whisk in maple syrup; slowly whisk in cream until smooth. Use immediately.

CINNAMON PERSIMMON CAKE

Makes 1 (9 inch) cake

We blended a persimmon and buttermilk together to add to this cake batter, giving the one-layer beauty the most divine texture. But we didn't stop there, crowning the buttercream with slices of Sugared Persimmons.

1 Hachiya persimmon (230 grams), top removed
½ cup (120 grams) whole buttermilk
1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter*, softened
1⅔ cups (333 grams) granulated sugar
3 large eggs (150 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
2½ cups (312 grams) cake flour
1 tablespoon (6 grams) ground cinnamon
1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
½ teaspoon (2.5 grams) baking soda
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
1 cup (178 grams) chopped Fuyu persimmons
Honey Buttercream (recipe follows)
Sugared Persimmons (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Butter a 9-inch springform pan. Line bottom of pan with parchment paper.
2. In the container of a blender, place Hachiya persimmon and buttermilk; process until smooth. Set aside
3. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in vanilla
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with buttermilk mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Fold in Fuyu persimmons. Spread batter in prepared pan.
5. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 hour, covering with foil halfway through baking to prevent excess browning. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan, and let cool completely on a wire rack. Spread Honey Buttercream on top of cake. Top with Sugared Persimmons.

**We used Président*

Honey Buttercream

Makes about 3 cups

1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened
8 ounces (225 grams) cream cheese, softened
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved
2 tablespoons (42 grams) honey
⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
2 cups (240 grams) confectioners' sugar

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, cream cheese, and reserved vanilla bean seeds with at medium speed until smooth and creamy. Add honey and salt, beating until combined. Gradually add confectioners' sugar, beating until smooth. Use immediately.

Sugared Persimmons

Makes about 30 sugared persimmons

¼ cup (60 grams) plus 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water, divided
½ teaspoon (3.5 grams) honey
2 Fuyu persimmons (290 grams), sliced ⅛ inch thick
¾ cup (150 grams) granulated sugar, divided

1. Preheat oven to 250°F (130°C). Line 2 baking sheets with nonstick baking mats.
2. In a small microwave-safe bowl, combine 1 tablespoon (15 grams) water and honey. Heat on high until honey is dissolved, about 15 seconds.
3. Place sliced persimmons on prepared pans. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush persimmon slices with honey water.
4. Bake for 15 minutes. Turn persimmon slices, and bake until dry to the touch, 10 to 15 minutes more. Let cool completely.
5. In a small saucepan, combine ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar and remaining ¼ cup (60 grams) water. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until sugar is dissolved. Let cool completely.
6. Using a pastry brush, brush both sides of dried persimmon slices with sugar syrup; immediately toss in remaining ½ cup (100 grams) sugar. Use immediately.

Around THE World IN FIVE COOKIES

FROM THE SUNNY ARCHIPELAGO OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE WINDSWEPT BRITISH ISLES, WE'RE ROUNDING UP OUR FAVORITE FESTIVE COOKIES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY WILLIAM DICKEY

Casadinhos
page 97

Viennese Sandwich Cookies
page 96

Italian Rainbow Cookies
page 97

"Food for the Gods" Bars
page 97

Jam-Filled Kolaczki Cookies

JAM-FILLED KOLACZKI COOKIES

Makes about 22 cookies

Popular throughout central and Eastern Europe around the holidays, these jewel-toned cookies consist of a tender cream cheese dough folded over your favorite thick preserves or jam and dusted with confectioners' sugar. Our recipe is true to the original, save for one decadent detail: rather than dusting with confectioners' sugar, we drizzled our cookies with a creamy glaze for a festive touch.

- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **4 ounces (115 grams) cream cheese, softened**
- **1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar, divided**
- **2 teaspoons (2 grams) lemon zest (about 2 medium lemons)**
- **¾ teaspoon (3 grams) vanilla extract, divided**
- **1¼ cups (156 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cardamom**
- **½ teaspoon kosher salt, divided**
- **⅓ cup (100 grams) thick jam or preserves**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) heavy whipping cream**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and cream cheese at medium speed until smooth and well combined, about 1 minute, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add ⅓ cup (40 grams) confectioners' sugar, lemon zest, and ½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla; beat at medium speed until well combined, about 1 minute.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cardamom, and ¼ teaspoon salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined. (Dough will be sticky.) Shape dough into a 5½-inch square, about ¾ inch thick, and wrap in plastic wrap. Refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours or overnight.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. On a heavily floured surface, roll dough to ⅛-inch thickness, lightly flouring dough and work surface as needed. (If dough is refrigerated overnight, let stand at room temperature until softened, 10 to 15 minutes, if needed). Using a 2½-inch square cutter, cut dough, rerolling scraps as needed. Using a large offset or flat metal spatula, place on prepared pans.
5. Spread about ¾ teaspoon (4.5 grams) jam on each square, leaving about a ¼-inch border. Fold 2 opposite corners of dough over jam, and press together lightly to seal, using a small amount of water to adhere. Repeat with remaining cookies.
6. Bake until lightly golden, about 12 minutes. Let cool on pans for 2 minutes; remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks
7. In a small bowl, stir together cream, remaining ⅔ cup (80 grams) confectioners' sugar, remaining ¼ teaspoon (1 gram) vanilla, and remaining ¼ teaspoon salt until smooth; spoon into a small piping bag, and cut a ¼-inch opening in tip. Drizzle glaze onto cookies.

VIENNESE SANDWICH COOKIES

Makes about 18 sandwich cookies

We are obsessed with Gemma Stafford's take on the traditional Viennese whirl. The recipe, Simplest Buttery Viennese Fingers, is featured in her cookbook, Bigger Bolder Baking: A Fearless Approach to Baking Anytime, Anywhere. *Here, we reimagine the British teatime favorite as holiday-ready sandwich cookies packed with warm winter spice. We added mulling spices for a touch of warmth and filled these wintry sammies with sweet, sophisticated Cherry-Port Buttercream.*

- **2 cups (454 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **⅔ cup (80 grams) confectioners' sugar**
- **2 tablespoons (16 grams) packed orange zest**
- **1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground ginger**
- **1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground cloves**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground nutmeg**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground allspice**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground black pepper**
- **3⅓ cups (417 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **6 tablespoons (48 grams) cornstarch**
- **Cherry-Port Buttercream (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Using a permanent marker, draw 36 (4x1-inch) rectangles, evenly spaced, on 3 sheets of parchment paper (12 per parchment). Turn parchment over, and place on 3 baking sheets.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter, confectioners' sugar, orange zest, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, salt, nutmeg, allspice, and pepper at medium speed until well combined and creamy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl.
3. In a medium bowl, sift together flour and cornstarch. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating until combined.
4. Place about 1 cup (247 grams) dough into a piping bag fitted with a medium open star tip (Wilton 4B); pipe small dots of batter under parchment to adhere to baking sheets. Using drawn rectangles as guides, pipe batter in a zigzag pattern. (Dough will take some effort to pipe.) Repeat with remaining dough. Refrigerate for 15 minutes.
5. Bake until lightly golden and firm to the touch, about 14 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Carefully remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks
6. Spoon Cherry-Port Buttercream into a large piping bag fitted with a medium open star tip (Wilton 4B); pipe about 2 tablespoons (30 grams) buttercream onto flat side of half of cookies. Place remaining cookies, flat side down, on top of buttercream. Serve immediately.

Cherry-Port Buttercream

Makes about 2⅔ cups

- **¾ cup (170 grams) ruby port**
- **¼ cup (80 grams) cherry preserves**
- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **4 cups (480 grams) confectioners' sugar**

1. In a small saucepan, bring port and preserves to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium; cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture reduces to ¼ cup, 15 to 20 minutes. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve, pressing out as much liquid as possible; discard solids. Let cool completely.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter at medium speed until smooth and creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Beat in vanilla and salt. With mixer on low speed, gradually add confectioners' sugar until combined. Add 2 tablespoons (about 34 grams) cooled port mixture; beat at medium speed until fluffy and well combined, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Use immediately.

CASADINHOS

Makes 35 to 40 sandwich cookies

Derived from the Portuguese for "married," these sandwich cookies are a staple at Brazilian weddings. Speckled with warm spice and spiked with rum, the tender butter cookies are joined by a sweet-tart guava jam, symbolizing the union of two people through marriage. Commonly filled with guava paste, casadinhos are so beloved in Brazil that they're also baked for any special occasion, especially the year-end holidays.

- **1 cup (227 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **⅔ cup (133 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1 large egg (50 grams), room temperature**
- **2 large egg yolks (37 grams), room temperature**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) spiced rum**
- **1 tablespoon (13 grams) vanilla extract**
- **2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1 cup (128 grams) cornstarch (see Note)**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon**
- **¼ teaspoon ground allspice**
- **1½ (14.1-ounce) packages (600 grams) guava paste, cubed**
- **⅓ cup (80 grams) water**
- **2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon (35 grams) fresh lemon juice**
- **Confectioners' sugar, for dusting**

1. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and granulated sugar at medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg and egg yolks, one at a time, beating until well combined after each addition. Beat in rum and vanilla.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, cornstarch, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, and allspice. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined. Divide dough in half; shape each half into a disk, and wrap in plastic wrap. Freeze until firm, about 2 hours.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
4. Unwrap one half of dough, and let stand at room temperature until slightly softened, 10 to 15 minutes. On a heavily floured surface, roll dough to ⅛-inch thickness; lightly flour dough and work surface as needed. Using a 2-inch fluted round cutter dipped in flour, cut dough, rerolling scraps as needed, and place 1 inch apart on prepared pans. Repeat with remaining half of dough.
5. Bake, in batches if needed, until edges are lightly golden, 10 to 13 minutes, rotating pans halfway through baking. Let cool on pans for 2 minutes. Remove from pans, and let cool completely on wire racks.
6. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, combine guava paste, ⅓ cup (80 grams) water, and lemon juice; cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until melted and smooth. Remove from heat; let stand at room temperature or refrigerate until an instant-read thermometer registers 85°F (29°C).
7. Dust half of cookies with confectioners' sugar. Transfer guava mixture to a piping bag fitted with a ¼-inch round piping tip (Wilton No. 10). Pipe about 1½ to 2 teaspoons (about 12 grams) filling onto flat side of remaining cookies. Place sugar-dusted cookies, flat side down, on top of filling.

Note: *Don't be alarmed by using a whole cup of cornstarch in your cookie dough. This ingredient helps create that signature melt-in-your-mouth casadinhos texture*

"FOOD FOR THE GODS" BARS

Makes 24 bars

During the holiday season in the Philippines, Filipinos bake these walnut- and date-studded bars to give to loved ones as individually wrapped treats. The grand name (pagkain para sa mga diyos *in Filipino) is thought to go back to the days of Spanish rule over the archipelago, when dates and walnuts were delicacies not many could afford, making them fit only for divine consumption. While we can't vouch for the accuracy of that story, we can confirm these bars are pure buttery bliss.*

- **1½ cups (334 grams) bourbon**
- **1½ cups (250 grams) packed whole Medjool dates**
- **2 cups (440 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **1½ cups (340 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar**
- **3 large eggs (150 grams), room temperature**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1½ cups (187 grams) all-purpose flour, divided**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **¾ cup (85 grams) roughly chopped toasted pecans**
- **¾ cup (85 grams) roughly chopped toasted walnuts**

1. Line a baking sheet with paper towels
2. In a large microwave-safe bowl, heat bourbon on high until an instant-read thermometer registers 180°F (82°C), about 2 minutes. (Alternatively, in a small heavy-bottomed saucepan, heat bourbon over medium heat until an instant-read thermometer registers 180°F [82°C].) Stir in dates; let stand for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain dates, reserving liquid for another use, if desired. Spread dates on prepared pan, and pat dry. Remove pits; chop dates into ¼- to ⅓-inch pieces.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line a 13x9-inch baking pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
4. In a large bowl, whisk together brown sugar, melted butter, and granulated sugar until well combined. Beat in eggs and vanilla until well combined.
5. In another large bowl, whisk together 1¼ cups (156 grams) flour, baking powder, and salt. Gradually fold flour mixture into butter mixture just until combined.
6. In a medium bowl, stir together dates, pecans, and walnuts; add remaining ¼ cup (31 grams) flour, stirring until well combined. Fold date mixture into batter. Spoon into prepared pan, smoothing top.
7. Bake for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 300°F (150°C); bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean and an instant-read thermometer inserted in center registers 205°F (96°C), about 40 minutes more. Let cool completely in pan. Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Using a serrated knife, cut into 24 bars.

PRO TIP

To recreate our packaging on page 94, cut 2-inch strips of parchment paper, wrap around each bar, and secure with baker's twine.

ITALIAN RAINBOW COOKIES

Makes 32 (3x1 inch) bars

These tender cookies are made of brightly colored almond cakes layered with apricot preserves and topped off with a thin chocolate coating. Resembling the Italian flag, they were actually created in the United States by homesick Italian American bakers to commemorate their native land around the holidays.

- **5 large eggs (250 grams), separated and room temperature**
- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar, divided**
- **8 ounces (225 grams) almond paste, chopped into ¼-inch pieces**
- **1 cup (227 grams) cold unsalted butter, cubed**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) almond extract**
- **2 cups (250 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **¾ teaspoon (2.25 grams) kosher salt**
- **30 drops (3 grams) red food coloring**
- **20 drops (2 grams) green food coloring**
- **⅔ cup (228 grams) strained apricot preserves**
- **6 ounces (175 grams) 70% cacao bittersweet chocolate baking bars, chopped**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) coconut oil**
- **Flaked sea salt, for sprinkling**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line 3 (13x9-inch) baking pans with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, beat egg whites at medium-high speed until foamy, about 1 minute. Gradually add ¼ cup (50 grams) sugar, beating until stiff peaks form. Gently transfer to a medium bowl.
3. Clean bowl of stand mixer, and switch to the paddle attachment. Add almond paste to bowl. With mixer on medium-low speed, gradually add remaining ¾ cup (150 grams) sugar, beating until combined. Add cold butter, 1 tablespoon (14 grams) at a time, beating until well combined after each addition. Increase mixer speed to medium, and beat until fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add egg yolks, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in extracts.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour and kosher salt. With mixer on low speed, add flour mixture to butter mixture, beating just until combined. (Batter will be thick.) Stir one-fourth of egg white mixture into batter. Gently fold in remaining egg white mixture in three additions until well combined.
5. Divide batter among 3 bowls (about 1½ cups [356 grams] each). Add red food coloring to first bowl; using a silicone spatula, fold until well combined. Add green food coloring to second bowl; using a clean silicone spatula, fold until well combined. Leave third bowl uncolored. Spread each batter separately in prepared pans.
6. Bake until layers begin to pull away from sides of pan, 10 to 12 minutes. Let cool completely in pans on wire racks.
7. To assemble, transfer green layer to a cutting board; spread half of preserves on top in an even layer. Top with uncolored layer; spread remaining preserves on uncolored layer. Top with red layer, and cover red layer with plastic wrap. Place an empty 13x9-inch baking pan on top; weigh down with cans. Refrigerate for 4 hours or up to overnight.
8. In a small microwave-safe bowl, heat chocolate on high in 10-second intervals, stirring between each, until melted and smooth (1 to 1½ minutes total). Stir in coconut oil until well combined.
9. Using a small offset spatula, spread chocolate mixture onto layers. (It's OK if some chocolate runs down sides.) Gently tap cutting board on counter to smooth chocolate into an even layer. Refrigerate for 15 minutes. Using a warm serrated knife, trim edges. Cut into bars, dipping knife in warm water and wiping clean between each cut. Sprinkle with sea salt.

COFFEE CAKE *Customized*

THE ULTIMATE HOLIDAY WAKE-UP CALL? COFFEE CAKE. WE BRING YOU ONE BATTER, THREE WAYS. IN ADDITION TO OUR CLASSIC SOUR CREAM CAKE AND TWO SEASONAL SPINS ON IT (INCLUDING MIX-AND-MATCH STREUSELS AND GLAZES), WE THREW IN AN EXTRA GINGERBREAD COFFEE CAKE RECIPE YOU'LL END UP CRAVING YEAR-ROUND.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICOLE DU BOIS
STYLING BY CAROLINE BLUM

Cranberry Citrus
Coffee Cake
page 105

Gingerbread Coffee Cake
page 106

Mulled Apple Coffee Cake
page 105

SOUR CREAM COFFEE CAKE

Makes 1 (9 inch) cake

This endlessly customizable classic comes together in a flash. The warm notes of vanilla complement the subtle tanginess from the sour cream beautifully in the irresistibly tender crumb. When topped with the nutty crunch from the almond-cinnamon streusel, it's pure magic.

1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar
½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted
2 large eggs (100 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
½ cup (120 grams) sour cream
¼ cup (60 grams) whole milk
Almond Streusel (recipe follows)
Sour Cream Glaze (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together sugar, melted butter, eggs, and vanilla
3. In another medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Whisk flour mixture into butter mixture. Add sour cream and milk, whisking just until combined. Pour into prepared pan, smoothing top with an offset spatula. Sprinkle with Almond Streusel.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan, and drizzle with Sour Cream Glaze. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Almond Streusel

Makes about 1 cup

½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour
½ cup (57 grams) sliced almonds
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, melted

1. In a medium bowl, stir together flour, almonds, sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Stir in melted butter until mixture is crumbly. Crumble with your fingertips until desired consistency is reached.

Sour Cream Glaze

Makes about ½ cup

1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
2 tablespoons (30 grams) sour cream
1 tablespoon (15 grams) whole milk
½ teaspoon (2 grams) vanilla extract

1. In a small bowl, whisk together all ingredients until smooth

MULLED APPLE COFFEE CAKE

Makes 1 (9 inch) cake

Brimming with mulling spices and tender chunks of apple, this aromatic cake is the epitome of comfort. We swapped the original version's simple glaze for a thick Caramel Sauce that settles in sweet little pools when poured over the Pecan Streusel. Visit page 33 for the lowdown on how mulling spices can elevate your baked goods.

- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**
- **2 tablespoons (6 grams) orange zest**
- **2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground allspice**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground star anise**
- **½ cup (120 grams) sour cream**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) whole milk**
- **1¼ cups (155 grams) chopped Pink Lady apples, divided**
- **Pecan Streusel (recipe follows)**
- **Caramel Sauce (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together sugar, melted butter, eggs, orange zest, and vanilla.
3. In another medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, allspice, cloves, and star anise. Whisk flour mixture into butter mixture. Add sour cream and milk, whisking just until combined. Fold in 1 cup (124 grams) apples. Pour into prepared pan, smoothing with an offset spatula. Top with remaining ¼ cup (31 grams) apples; sprinkle with Pecan Streusel.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan, and drizzle with Caramel Sauce. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Pecan Streusel

Makes about 1 cup

- **½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ cup (57 grams) chopped pecans***
- **¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground allspice**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground star anise**
- **3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, melted**

1. In a medium bowl, stir together flour, pecans, sugar, salt, cinnamon, allspice, cloves, and star anise. Stir in melted butter until mixture is crumbly. Crumble with your fingertips until desired consistency is reached.

**We used Sunnyland Farms Raw Georgia Pecan Halves*

Caramel Sauce

Makes 1 cup

- **¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter**
- **½ cup (110 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **1 teaspoon (1 gram) orange zest**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**
- **½ cup (120 grams) heavy whipping cream**

1. In a small saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Whisk in brown sugar, orange zest, and salt until sugar is dissolved. Add heavy cream, and bring to a boil. Cook for 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl, and let cool completely. Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to a month.

CRANBERRY CITRUS COFFEE CAKE

Makes 1 (9 inch) cake

This zesty cake is as merry and bright as they come. With lemon and orange zest in the batter and the Walnut Streusel, and both zests and juices in the glaze, every bite of this vibrant treat offers an explosion of citrus flavor. We topped the batter with a layer of cranberries before baking for gorgeous color and extra sweetness.

- **1 cup (200 grams) granulated sugar**
- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**
- **2 tablespoons (6 grams) orange zest**
- **1 tablespoon (3 grams) lemon zest**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **1½ cups (188 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder**
- **½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt**

½ cup (120 grams) sour cream
¼ cup (60 grams) whole milk
1¼ cups (92 grams) fresh or thawed frozen cranberries*
Walnut Streusel (recipe follows)
Citrus Glaze (recipe follows)

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together sugar, melted butter, eggs, zests, and vanilla.
3. In another medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, and salt. Whisk flour mixture into butter mixture. Add sour cream and milk, whisking just until combined. Pour into prepared pan, smoothing top with an offset spatula. Top with cranberries; sprinkle with Walnut Streusel.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan, and drizzle with Citrus Glaze. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**If using thawed frozen cranberries, make sure to pat them dry before using.*

Walnut Streusel

Makes about 1 cup

½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour
½ cup (57 grams) chopped walnuts
¼ cup (50 grams) granulated sugar
1 teaspoon (1 gram) orange zest
1 teaspoon (1 gram) lemon zest
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, melted

1. In a medium bowl, stir together flour, walnuts, sugar, zests, and salt. Stir in melted butter until mixture is crumbly. Crumble with your fingertips until desired consistency is reached.

Citrus Glaze

Makes about ½ cup

1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar
2 tablespoons (30 grams) sour cream
1 teaspoon (1 gram) orange zest
2 teaspoons (10 grams) orange juice
1 teaspoon (1 gram) lemon zest
1 teaspoon (5 grams) lemon juice
1 teaspoon (5 grams) whole milk

1. In a small bowl, whisk together all ingredients until smooth.

GINGERBREAD COFFEE CAKE

Makes 1 (9 inch) cake

If the holiday season could be captured in a cake, this would be it. Because of the ingredients required for that divine gingerbread flavor (looking at you, molasses), this recipe is a slight departure from our classic sour cream cake and its variations. However, it's the winner you'll be coming back to year after year. With a divinely moist crumb, the cake's spiced ginger notes are even more delicious paired with the earthy, buttery hazelnuts in the streusel.

¾ cup (165 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, melted
¼ cup (85 grams) unsulphured molasses
2 large eggs (100 grams)
2 teaspoons (8 grams) vanilla extract
1⅔ cups (208 grams) all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons (33 grams) chopped candied ginger
1½ teaspoons (7.5 grams) baking powder
1½ teaspoons (3 grams) ground ginger
1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon (1.5 grams) kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
½ cup (120 grams) sour cream
¼ cup (60 grams) whole milk
Hazelnut Streusel (recipe follows)
Garnish: confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch springform pan with baking spray with flour.
2. In a medium bowl, whisk together brown sugar, melted butter, molasses, eggs, and vanilla.
3. In another medium bowl, whisk together flour, candied ginger, baking powder, ground ginger, cinnamon, salt, nutmeg, and cloves. Whisk flour mixture into butter mixture. Add sour cream and milk, whisking just until combined. Pour into prepared pan, smoothing top with an offset spatula. Sprinkle with Hazelnut Streusel.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Let cool in pan for 15 minutes. Remove from pan, and dust with confectioners' sugar, if desired. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Hazelnut Streusel

Makes about 1 cup

½ cup (63 grams) all-purpose flour
½ cup (57 grams) chopped raw hazelnuts
¼ cup (55 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
3 tablespoons (42 grams) unsalted butter, melted

1. In a medium bowl, stir together flour, hazelnuts, brown sugar, salt, cinnamon, and ginger. Stir in melted butter until mixture is crumbly. Crumble with your fingertips until desired consistency is reached.

Lebkuchen

UNCOVER HOW THESE SPICED GERMAN COOKIES WENT FROM MEDIEVAL MARVEL TO GLOBAL HOLIDAY SENSATION

BY LILLIE MERMOUD

Deep in the heart of Bavaria, Germany, the snowy cobblestone streets of Nuremberg come to life every holiday season as locals and tourists visit the bustling alleys of the Christkindlesmarkt, Nuremberg's world-renowned holiday market. Among the labyrinth of rustic wooden stalls, market-goers purchase everything from steaming plates of bratwurst to artisanal ceramics, but one holiday treat reigns supreme: lebkuchen. Packed with honey, black pepper, cocoa, and all manner of warm winter spices, these centuries-old cookies may be native to Nuremberg, but they've become a global holiday staple.

Descended from honey cakes baked by the ancient Egyptians and Romans, lebkuchen as we know them today date back to the Middle Ages. In the 13th century, monks living in Franconia—the German medieval kingdom where Nuremberg stands today—revamped the ancients' recipe. The result was a tender, palm-size cookie that's packed with cocoa, cinnamon, cloves, allspice, cardamom, ginger, and aniseed. They topped the cookie with blanched almonds and covered it in a boozy glaze, both toppings still seen in the modern lebkuchen we enjoy today. Often compared to gingerbread, lebkuchen differs in that it is made with little to no traditional flour, instead calling for almond or walnut flour. Unlike gingerbread, which uses molasses and sugar as the sweetener, lebkuchen calls for honey only.

Lebkuchen didn't have its big break until 1487 when Emperor Frederick III, the leader of the Holy Roman Empire, traveled to Nuremberg and fell in love with the city and its sweets. In an attempt to win over its people, the emperor organized an event inviting 4,000 children to feast on lebkuchen. The catch? The lebkuchen were imprinted with his portrait. However transparent this public relations campaign was, it was a huge success. Lebkuchen went viral, so to speak. Bakers across Nuremberg devoted their careers to baking the cakey cookies and united in 1643 to form the League of Lebkuchen-Bakers. Setting the standards by which all lebkuchen were made, the trade guild named their recipe Nürnberger lebkuchen (Nuremberg lebkuchen). Also sometimes referred to as pfefferkuchen, meaning "pepper cakes," or *Elisenlebkuchen*—said to be named after a lebkuchen maker's daughter—lebkuchen go by this name still today.

It didn't take long for word to get out to the rest of Europe that Nuremberg was baking up an irresistible spiced treat. Struck by a spirit of entrepreneurship, lebkuchen bakers took their Nürnberger lebkuchen to an international level and industrialized production in 1867. Demand skyrocketed. Lebkuchen was a holiday staple from the lush Bavarian valleys to France's western shores. By the turn of the 20th century, the city was turning out about a million dollars' worth of lebkuchen every year, most of which was sold in foreign markets as far as the United States.

Today, bakery cases and holiday market stalls overflow with lebkuchen everywhere from Montreal, Canada, to Strasbourg, France, and Florence, Italy. Once a practice reserved for professional lebkuchen makers, home bakers around the world also whip up these cookies to ring in the holiday season. Inspired by the signature Nürnberger lebkuchen, iterations of lebkuchen vary from chocolate-covered cookies to cutout cakes shaped like hearts and even intricate stamped versions.

The good news? You don't have to travel to Bavaria to get a taste of these Old-World treats. Nuremberg-based Lebkuchen-Schmidt ships decorative tins of these cookies worldwide, available at *lebkuchen-schmidt com*. Leckerlee, based in New York, New York, makes authentic Nuremberg lebkuchen stateside, which are available for order at *leckerlee.com*. When you order from these lebkuchen specialists, you're not just getting a batch of well-spiced cookies. Each order comes packaged in ornate decorative boxes that are true collector's items, ranging from intricate porcelain cookie jars to brightly colored aluminum tins designed by artists.

Whether you have a tin of lebkuchen delivered to your doorstep or are enjoying one straight from the stall at Nuremberg's storied Christkindlesmarkt, be sure to savor more than the aromatic flavor. Revel in the medieval sweet that's brought the world a little closer together for the holidays.

MARKET MAINSTAY

Even though lebkuchen predate Nuremberg's famed Christkindlesmarkt by several hundred years, it's no coincidence that the cookies ascended to worldwide fame during the early days of the market around the middle of the 16th century. Though not much is known about the origins of Christkindlesmarkt, records show that every trade guild and artisan in Nuremberg set up stalls in the city center to sell their wares for the holiday season. The League of Lebkuchen-Bakers would have been no exception. As locals weaved in and out of the market in search of holiday gifts, the sweet and spicy scent of lebkuchen would have wafted through the air, drawing in shoppers to purchase a decorative wooden box filled with the tender cookies.

Lebkuchen

Makes about 32 cookies

Inspired by the centuries-old lebkuchen recipe of Nuremberg, Germany, these large, cakey cookies are packed with a blend of warm spices and spiked with rum.

- **½ cup (113 grams) unsalted butter, softened**
- **1½ cups (330 grams) firmly packed dark brown sugar**
- **½ cup (170 grams) honey**
- **2 large eggs (100 grams)**
- **1 tablespoon (15 grams) spiced rum**
- **1 tablespoon (3 grams) lemon zest**
- **4 cups (500 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **½ cup (48 grams) almond flour**
- **3 tablespoons (15 grams) cocoa powder**
- **1 tablespoon (6 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground ginger**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) baking powder**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground cloves**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground allspice**
- **¼ teaspoon (1.25 grams) baking soda**
- **¼ teaspoon ground mace**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cardamom**
- **1 cup (240 grams) whole milk**
- **128 whole blanched almonds**
- **Rum Sugar Glaze (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 325°F (170°C). Line 4 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, beat butter and brown sugar at medium speed until fluffy, 3 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape sides of bowl. Add honey, beating until combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in rum and lemon zest.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together flours, cocoa, cinnamon, ginger, salt, baking powder, cloves, allspice, baking soda, mace, and cardamom. With mixer on low speed, gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture, beating just until combined after each addition. Using a 3-tablespoon spring-loaded scoop, scoop dough, and place 2 inches apart on prepared pans. Press 4 almonds, touching, into center of each dough ball. (The almonds will move apart as the cookie bakes.)
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 16 to 18 minutes. Let cool on pans for 5 minutes. Remove from pans, and place on wire racks. Using a pastry brush, brush tops of cookies with Rum Sugar Glaze. (If glaze gets too thick, heat in the microwave on high for 10 seconds, stir, and continue brushing cookies.) Let dry and cool completely on wire racks before serving.

Rum Sugar Glaze

Makes about ¾ cup

- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**
- **¼ cup (60 grams) water**
- **2 tablespoons (30 grams) spiced rum**
- **1 cup (120 grams) confectioners' sugar**

1. In a small saucepan, whisk together granulated sugar and ¼ cup (60 grams) water. Heat over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until bubbles form around edges of pan. Simmer 3 minutes. Remove from heat, and whisk in rum. Sift confectioners' sugar over granulated sugar mixture, and whisk until smooth. (Clumps will form in your glaze if you do not sift.) Pour into a microwave-safe bowl.

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Mulled Spice BROWNIES

PACKED WITH SOUL-WARMING SPICE, THESE GLAMOROUS PORT-SPIKED BROWNIES WILL BE THE TOAST OF YOUR NEXT HOLIDAY PARTY

MULLED SPICE BROWNIES

Makes 16 brownies

These fudgy stir-together brownies get rich, sophisticated notes from a blend of mulling spices and port-soaked orange peel.

- **1¾ cups (350 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1¼ cups (284 grams) unsalted butter, melted**
- **⅔ cup (147 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **1 teaspoon (4 grams) vanilla extract**
- **5 large eggs (250 grams), room temperature**
- **1 cup (85 grams) unsweetened natural cocoa powder, sifted**
- **¾ cup (94 grams) all-purpose flour**
- **3¾ teaspoons (7.5 grams) Mulled Spice Mix (recipe follows)**
- **1 teaspoon (3 grams) kosher salt**
- **¾ teaspoon (3.75 grams) baking powder**
- **1½ teaspoons (5 grams) finely chopped port-soaked orange peel (reserved from Spiced Port Syrup [recipe follows])**
- **Ganache Frosting (recipe follows)**
- **Spiced Port Syrup (recipe follows)**
- **Garnish: Mulled Spice Mix (recipe follows)**

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Spray a 9-inch square baking pan with cooking spray; line pan with parchment paper, letting excess extend over sides of pan.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together granulated sugar, melted butter, brown sugar, and vanilla until well combined. Add eggs, one at a time, beating until well combined after each addition.
3. In a large bowl, whisk together cocoa, flour, Mulled Spice Mix, salt, and baking powder. Gradually stir cocoa mixture into sugar mixture until combined. Fold in chopped orange peel, breaking up any clumps if needed. Spoon batter into prepared pan, smoothing top.
4. Bake until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out with just a few moist crumbs, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool completely in pan on a wire rack.
5. Spread Ganache Frosting onto cooled brownies, using a small offset spatula or the back of a spoon to create swirls. (For deeper swirls, refrigerate brownies for about 15 minutes to slightly firm up frosting before swirling.) Using excess parchment as handles, remove from pan. Cut into bars. Drizzle with Spiced Port Syrup just before serving. Garnish with Mulled Spice Mix, if desired.

Mulled Spice Mix

Makes 7½ teaspoons

- **2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground cinnamon**
- **2 teaspoons (4 grams) ground ginger**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground nutmeg**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground cloves**
- **1 teaspoon (2 grams) ground allspice**
- **½ teaspoon (1 gram) ground black pepper**

1. In a small bowl, stir together all ingredients until well combined.

Spiced Port Syrup

Makes about ⅓ cup

- **½ medium navel orange (about 100 grams)**
- **1 cup (224 grams) ruby port**
- **⅓ cup (67 grams) granulated sugar**
- **1 (2½- to 3-inch) cinnamon stick**
- **8 whole black peppercorns**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground allspice**
- **⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**

1. Using a Y-peeler, remove orange peel in long strips. Using a small paring knife, carefully remove any white pith from peel. Reserve remaining orange for another use.
2. In a 10-inch stainless steel skillet, stir together orange peel, port, and all remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium, and cook, stirring occasionally, until thickened and reduced to ⅓ cup, 12 to 15 minutes.
3. Strain mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium bowl. Finely chop 1½ teaspoons (5 grams) cooked orange peel; reserve for Mulled Spice Brownies. Discard remaining solids. Let syrup cool completely before using.

Ganache Frosting

Makes about 1¾ cups

- **4 ounces (115 grams) unsweetened chocolate baking bars, chopped**
- **¼ cup (57 grams) unsalted butter, cubed and softened**
- **1 teaspoon (5 grams) ruby port**
- **⅔ cup (160 grams) evaporated milk**
- **½ cup (100 grams) granulated sugar**
- **⅓ cup (73 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar**
- **¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

1. In the container of a blender, place chocolate, butter, and port.
2. In a medium saucepan, combine evaporated milk, sugars, and salt. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until sugars and salt are dissolved. Add to blender. Let stand for 5 minutes.
3. Process until thick and smooth, about 15 seconds. Using a spatula, stir mixture to check consistency. If needed, blend in additional 15-second increments to thicken more.

back page brownies

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NEW! SPECIAL ISSUE

COLLECTOR'S EDITION
Holiday
bake FROM SCRATCH
cookies
81 All-New Recipes from Superstar Bakers
Make-Ahead Tips and Pantry Stash Staples You Need to Get Holiday-Ready
How to Host the Ultimate Cookie Swap!
Festive Bars and Cookies to Make This Season Even Sweeter
SNOWFLAKE LINZER COOKIES
page 94

'Tis the season for cookies! We're celebrating in full force with an epic collection of recipes sure to make your kitchen merry and bright. We've teamed up with some of the movers and shakers of the baking world to bring you an issue full of the classic holiday flavors you crave, from gingerbread to peppermint to eggnog, along with feel-good favorites like chocolate, chai, and more. We check in with Tessa Huff, the bona fide queen of frosted desserts, for her ultimate shaped and iced cookies. Laura Kasavan of the blog *Tutti Dolci* shares her signature sablés now bedecked with seasonal sprinkles, and we return to Rebecca Firth for Asian-inspired creations that will bring a dash of spice to your holiday table. Whether you're pressed for time before your next cookie swap (don't miss our crash course on how to host your own!) or looking to flex your holiday decorating muscles with a royal icing masterpiece, this issue has a cookie for every occasion.

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